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Turbo Film As Artistic Apparatus And As Manifesto For The Uncertain Future Of Moving Images

Barbieri Marchi, Paololuca

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UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

Turbo Film As Artistic Apparatus And As Manifesto For The Uncertain Future Of Moving Images

by

Paololuca Barbieri Marchi

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth in partial fulfilment for the
degree of:

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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Relevant seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which works such as papers, films and art installation were often presented.

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Extras

A. Lectures

- Turbo Film and The uncertain Future of Moving Images, NADA Present, New York, 2016;
- An Introduction to Alterazioni Video and Turb Films, Accademia di Belle Arti di Carrara, Carrara, 2016;
- An Introduction to Turbo Films, Accademia di Belle Arti di Milano, Milan 2016;
- Editing Turbo Films and New Cinematic Objects, NABA, Media Design and Multimedia Arts, Milano, 2016;
- Born Digital, Link Art Center, 2014;
- Reframing the Real, an introduction to Turbo Films, Rhode Island school of design, 2012;
- Paololuca Barbieri Marchi: Post Cinema: A Manifesto for TurboFilm, Naba University, Milano, 2012;
- Alterazioni Video, osservatorio Balcani, DOCVA, Documentation Center for Visual Art, Milano, 2012;
- The TurboFilm Manifesto, Department of Art and Art Professions, New York University, New York, 2012;
- The Influencers, Center of Contemporary Culture, Barcelona, 2008.

B. Selected Screenings and Exhibitions:

- *"Turbo Film – A Retrospective"*, curated by Matteo Pavesi, Italian Cinema Foundation, Spazio Oberdan, Milan, 2016;
- *"Ambaradan"*, Les Rencontres internationales Film Festival, curated by Nathalie Hénon and Jean-François Rettig, Paris, 2016;
- *"Ambaradan"*, Cairo Video Festival, Video Art and Experimental Films, Cairo, 2016;
- *"Breaking news"*, curated by Elena Abbiatici, W MUSEUM, Iksan City, Jeonlabuk-Do, 2016;
- *"GLITCH – Interferences between Art and Cinema in Italy"*, curated by Davide Giannella, OCAT – Shanghai, 2016;

- “*GLITCH – Interferences between Art and Cinema in Italy*”, curated by Davide Giannella, PAC Pavilion for Contemporary Art, Milan, 2016;
- “*Symphony No.2*” (performance), Hebbel Am Ufer, in collaboration with Ragnar Kjartansson, a Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin, 2015;
- “*Symphony No.2*” (film), in collaboration with Ragnar Kjartansson, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin, 2015;
- “*Ambaradan*”, premiere screening, Byron Carlyle Theater, NADA art fair, Miami, 2014;
- “*Freak Out!*”, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York City, 2013;
- “*The New Cinema Event – Part 4*”, curated by Davide Giannella in collaboration with Ramiken Crucible Gallery, Suffolk Street Parking, New York City, 2013;
- “*Fred*”, BMW Guggenheim LAB, curated by Maria Nicanor, Berlin, 2012;
- “*Hotel Milano*”, Milano Film Festival, Milan, 2012;
- “*Le President*”, Enacting Populism, Kadist Foundation, Paris, 2012;
- “*The New Cinema Event*”, within “*Moma PS1 Sunday Sessions*” series, at the MoMA PS1, Performance Dome, New York City, 2012;
- “*The New Cinema Event – The Blind Barber*”, Performa 2011, New York City, 2011;
- “*Black Rain*”, Milano Film Festival, Milan, 2011;
- “*All My Friends Are Dead*”, 21x21, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, curated by Francesco Bonami, Turin, 2010;
- “*Per Troppo Amore*”, 12th International Architecture Exhibition –
- *People meet in Architecture*” Italian Pavilion, Venice Biennale, curated by Luca Molinari, Venice, 2010;
- Incompiuto Siciliano, Shenhzen Biennale of Architecture, curated by Ou Ning and Beatrice Galilee, ShenHzen, 2012
- “*Cineambiente*”, within Environmental Film Festival, curated by Maria Brunelli and Silvia Cirelli, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2010;
- “*I Would Prefer Not To*”, Solo Exhibition, Prometeo Gallery, Milan, 2009;
- “*Artist Serial Killer*”, Manifesta 7 – The European Biennial of Contemporary Arts, curated by Adam Budak, Trentino - South Tyrol, 2008;
- “*Painting*”, 52nd International Art Exhibition – “Think with the senses - Feel with the mind”, Venice Biennial, curated by Robert Storr, Venice, 2007;

C. Workshops:

- *"Passenger in a Landscape"*, Progettazione e organizzazione Cluster Theory, Basso Profilo, Dipartimento di Architettura di Ferrara, Ferrara, 2013
- *"Hotel Milano: Shooting a Turbo Film"*, NABA University, Milano, 2012;
- *"Milano e Oltre: creatività giovanile verso nuove ecologie urbane"*, Connecting Cultures, Milan, 2012;
- *"Gespräche mit Künstlerkollektiven"*, Berliner Kunsthalle, Master Program Spatial Strategies - KHB, Berlin, 2011;
- *"Lavazh Parti"*, curated by Claudia Zanfi and Edi Muka, Italia Square, Tirana, 2011;
- *"I would prefer not to – #2"*, Skuc Gallery, Ljubljana, Slovenia 2011;
- *"What if/ How to"*, Libera Università di Bolzano, Bolzano, 2010;
- *"Arte al Centro"*, Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, 2010;
- *"Alterazioni Videos' Radical Entertainment, Networked Culture in the Post Digital Age"*, Center of Contemporary Culture of Barcellona, Barcellona, 2008;
- *"Incompiuto Siciliano"*, Hangar, Barcelona, 2008;

D. Publications:

- *"Turbo Film And The Uncertain Future Of Moving Images"*, Fausto Lupetti Ed. (for Italian Cinema Foundation), Milan, 2016;
- *"Make it Easy Make it Porn"*, Gallery On The Move, Milan, 2012;
- *"The Californization of the Planet"*, LIMINA No. 2, M-Node, Naba Books – Laureate Education, Milan, 2012;
- *"Thinking Media, Subversing Feeling, Scaffolding Knowledge: Art and Education in the Praxis of Transformation"*, Naba University, Milan, 2010;
- *"Mio Padre Ancora Non Lo Sa"*, in Flash Art, Issue No. 304, July-September 2012;
- *"Performative Practices"*, in conversation with Alterazioni Video, 2013;
- *"Painting"*, in *"Think With The Senses Feel With The Mind, Art In The Present"*, Fondazione la Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 2007;
- *"21x21, 21 artists for the 21st century"*, published by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, 2010;

E. Selected Press:

- “*Il video diventa film e mette il turbo*”, in *il Giornale dell’Arte*, 2016;
- G. Grossini, “*Alterazioni Video, trasgressioni e performance*”, in *Corriere della Sera Milano*, 15 February 2016;
- “*Vandalismi Digitali*”, in *Film TV Magazine*, 2016;
- “*I Turbo Film del collettivo Alterazioni Video*”, in *Sky Arte*, 17 February 2016;
- “*Quando i Film mettono il Turbo*”, in *Vivimilano*, 16 February 2016;
- “*Metti una sera a improvvisare un Turbo Film*”, in *Il Giorno*, 2016
- S. Spaventa, “*I Turbo Film*”, in *la Repubblica*, 17 February 2016;
- S. Spaventa, “*Il Mondo e’ un Turbo Film*”, in *Tutto Milano*, 15 February 2016;
- G. Bria, “*Alterazioni Video allo Spazio Oberdan di Milano: Un’avventura tra gli spaghetti western e il neorealismo di Youtube*”, in *Artribune*, 17 February 2016;
- “*Metti il Turbo all’Arte*”, in *Exibart*, 2016
- “*Tra Ny, Berlino e Milano: i Turbo Film*”, in *Milanotoday*, 2016
- M. Arrigoni, “*Cos’e’ un Turbo Film?*”, in *ATPDiary*, 2016
- “*Turbini e Video*”, in *Artribune*, 2016
- N. Mazzoleni, “*Be like water my friend*”, *Il Giornale delle Fondazioni*, 2016;
- E. Bordignon, “*Rosa Perfetto*”, in *Vogue Italia*, 2011;
- F. Pietropaolo, “*I would prefer not to*”, in *Art in America*, 2010;
- M. Lechner “*Enacting Populism, Droit Dans Ses Votes*”, in *Liberation*, 2012;
- P. Popham, “*Concrete Jungle*”, in *The Independent*, 2010;
- D. Giannella, “*Cum Magna Animo et Libidine*”, in *Vice Magazine*, 2012;
- Veloce, improvvisato, low budget, tra arte e web nasce il “TurboFilm”, *la Repubblica*, 2012
- D. Perra, “*Alterazioni Video*”, in *Mousse Magazine*, 2007;
- B. Pietroni, “*Piovono Neri*”, in *Amica*, 2010;
- N. Scevola, “*Hotel Milano Visto da Lontano, The New Yorkers*”, in *Vanity Fair*, 2012;
- L. Cairo, “*Fratelli d’Italia – Interviewmatch*”, 2013];
- D. Quaranta, “*Vernacular Video*”, in *Flash Art*, July 2010;
- R. Smith, “*Gooaaaaa!!!!*”, in *New York Times*, 2009;

F. Conference paper:

- “*The Californization of the Planet, Always Already New Conference, Planetary Collegium*”, Mediateca Santa Teresa, Milan 2012;

G. Awards:

- Jury Price Schermo dell’Arte Film Festival 2011, Florence, Italy, 2012;

H. Professional experience:

- Film Director and Campaign Creative Director for the Global Campaign Youth to Youth, Kailash Satyarthi Foundation, India, 2016;
- Creative Development Consultant, Viceland, Vice Media, New York, 2016;
- Founder of Alterazioni Video Art Collective;
- Creative Director and Media Strategist at Northern Star Creative Agency, New York, 2015-2016;
- Author and producer of Epic Future Vice TV Show, ongoing;
- Editor in Chief , Citizen Brooklyn Magazine, 2012- 2014;
- Film Editor for See Think Films, 2015;
- Creative Director and Strategy Consultant for REPRESENT MANDELA, Mandela Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa, 2015-2016;

I. Selected films releases:

- Ambaradan – 33’:10”, 2015
- Surfing with Satoshi – 25’:00”, 2014
- Symphony N2 – 42’:10”, 2015
- Hotel Milano – 17’:54”, 2013
- Per Troppo Amore – 22’:35”, 2012
- 2012 Le President, – 13’:37”, 2012
- Rosa Perfetto, 07’:00”, 2013
- Rotten Sharks , 9’ :00”, 2011
- Artists’ Serial Killer – 12’:25”, 2009
- Fred, The Film – 24’:53”, 2012
- Blind Barber – 25’:00”, 2011

- Turbo Films: The Documentary (trailer) – 3':50", 2016
- All My Friends Are Dead – 45': 34", 2009

J. Research updates:

- Research Update #9: Milano, IT, July 2013
- Research Update #8: Milano, IT, July 2013
- Research Update #7: Milano, IT, July 2012
- Research Update #6: Milano, IT, July 2012
- Research Update #5: Milano, IT, December 2011
- Research Update #4: Milano, IT, July 2011
- Research Update #3: Milano, IT, December 2010
- Research Update #2: Plymouth, UK, July 2010
- Research Update #1: Milano, IT, March 2010

1. Abstract

Turbo Film As Artistic Apparatus And As Manifesto For The Uncertain Future Of Moving Images

by Paololuca Barbieri Marchi

The following research is a practice-based Ph.D. in filmmaking that proposes to define an unclassified film genre and its specific artistic practice. This practice, at the intersection of experimental films, art-cinema and Youtube user-generated videos, I refer to as “Turbo Films.”

Beginning with a critical perspective on video art and experimental film history, as it relates to today’s public approach towards the production of moving images, the concept of “Turbo Films” is proposed as an opportunity to understand new trajectories in the production of image-culture, and as holistic *modus operandi* for the current cross-media environment.

Turbo Films have been the natural offspring of a specific methodology and approach to cinematic production, that was shared horizontally in within my collective. Our structure, with no hierarchies or role's definitions, offered a fluidity in the production of content, that became the perfect ground for the rise of this specific format.

In the first section I focus on the recent history of art and filmmaking in the production of moving images. Through a selection of theories and their critiques, I identify the need for a holistic strategy to integrate different practices and methodologies for a new, organic form of cultural production. I then propose and define Turbo Films as a new possible trajectory, an integrated toolset that combines research, writing, filmmaking, visual art performance, and political activism.

At the end of this section I also explore Turbo Films specific media context, focusing on a new trajectory for cinematic narrative structures that I define as expanded journalism. A new group of filmic works that emerges from the encounter between investigative journalism practices and creative activists and artists attitudes and tactics.

This first section will outline the conceptual milestones and the development of theories from which the practice of Turbo Films derives.

Each of the concepts analyzed in this first section will be then integrated in the constitution of the Turbo Film Manifesto and its consequential practical outcomes.

In the second section I will introduce the background of each Turbo Film and examine some of the most significant scenes, characters, and specific features, focusing on the praxis and highlighting some of the theoretical aspects and the creative processes behind them.

The final outcome of the thesis is the Turbo Film Manifesto, intended as a “rhetorical dispositive” to trigger the creation of new cross-platform media objects in today visual culture context.

The Turbo Films produced during the course of my research have the double function of defining a practice and testing its theoretical framework. In this research I will show how Turbo Films have the potential to become a new powerful cinematic dispositive that enables cross-cultural interferences between media and their contexts .

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3. Motivation

“The greatest mystery is not that we have been flung at random between this profusion of matter and the stars, but that within this prison we can draw from ourselves images powerful enough to deny our nothingness.”¹

“It’s not only rage that drives children to break their favorite toys. Sometimes it’s the urge to release the productive potentials trapped in the product; sometimes it’s simply the joy of wasting them.”²

I decided to undertake this academic research to deepen my knowledge of studies in the visual culture of contemporary society. Ten years ago I became the founder and director of Alterazioni Video, an art and research collective born in Milan and composed by a visual artist, a filmmaker, a musician, and a media-activist. Since its founding, the collective has exhibited internationally in museums, galleries, and institutions worldwide such as the Venice Biennial, MoMA PS1, New York, Manifesta Biennial, Trento, Performa New York, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin, among others.

Over time, the inexhaustible research and experimentation carried out by my artistic practice has led me to feel the necessity for a systematic investigation, through analysis and theoretical argumentation, of the issues brought to light by my creative work practice and process. The decision to undertake this Ph.D. program stems from this need to encounter new and ongoing research territories in the landscape of contemporary visual culture, and apply these paradigms to my art practice.

More specifically, through Alterazioni Video, I have experimented, in several different visual practices: from guerrilla activism to media pranks, from noise concerts to theatrical performances, from immersive installations to net art, from art objects such as prints and sculptures to filmmaking.

In the last three years I’ve been focused primarily in video art and experimental filmmaking. From this intense production a new style emerged that can be seen

1 Andre’ Malraux, *“Les noyers de l’Altenburg”*, p.664,665 (France, Gallinard, 1997)

2 John Kelsey, *“Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art”*, p.115 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010)

as a sum of all of the visual experiences that I've encountered in my transversal practice. This style became the very term for a shared, self-regulatory aesthetic and theoretical reference system. I named this style "Turbo." A term that references both the Balcanic music style called Turbo Folk³ - emerged after the Balkan War and that remixes pop music with local folklore culture - and the speed value of today digitally generated 'poor images' that allows constant manipulation and parallel narrative trajectories.⁴

The opportunity a Ph.D. program - that is to investigate the experiences and philosophical reflections concerning image production and art practices - has allowed me to integrate my research into a generation of new artworks, outlining a specific methodological approach in the area of knowledge production.

The mutually beneficial dialogue between conceptual elaborations and artistic research has offered a significant occasion to deepen my knowledge and spur new productive processes.

³ Ivana Kronja, "Turbo Folk and Dance Music in 1990s Serbia: Media, Ideology and the Production of Spectacle" published in *The Anthropology of East Europe Review*, Volume 22, p.103 (University of arts, Belgrade, 2004)

⁴ Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image", published in *"The Wretched of the screen p.31 (e-flux journal, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2012)*

4 Methodology

“On the one hand there are practices; on the other hand there are interpretations; on the one hand, there is the pictorial phenomenon and on the other the torrent of discourse about it which philosophers, writers or artists themselves have poured out.”⁵

The interdisciplinary nature of my research on the future of moving images and on new cinematic apparatuses for the production, circulation, and fruitions of art, films, and more common visual discourse, has led me to undertake parallel studies in different fields such as iconography, aesthetics, art, cinema, and ‘new media,’ here intended in the sense of the “Meta-media” described by Lev Manovich as a new way of accessing and manipulating information.⁶

While attempting to define an adequate taxonomy and a correlative visual practice for this project, a particular importance has been granted to theories of visual culture, the ‘pictorial turn’, and the nature of image production, distribution, and circulation systems carried out by both historical artists and filmmakers such as Jean Rouch and Dziga Vertov, as well as from the latest generation of artists such as Hito Steyerl, Jhon Kelsey and Seth Price.

The open issue regarding the future of moving images, pivotal to my research, has been outlined through an analysis of critical points revealed by the study of foundational texts on contemporary visual culture by authors such Gilles Deleuze, Lev Manovich, J.T. Mitchell, Jaques Ranciere, Thomas Elsaesser, David Martins Jones, among others, from both contemporary art and new media studies as well as philosophy and film theory.

My research also proposes, on an empirical level, new scenarios for the production and diffusion of moving images by articulating the Manifesto of a new cinematic apparatus defined as “Turbo Film.” This Manifesto is intended as a set of guidelines for knowledge production in a dynamic web culture environment of constant innovation, energy, and unpredictability.

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *“The Future of the Image”*, p.69 (Verso, London, 2009)

⁶ Lev Manovich, *“New Media from Borges to HTML”*, in *“The New Media Reader”*, p.13-25 (The MIT Press, Boston, 2003)

The methodology I adopted hence requires the parallel production of texts and visual content, interacting with each other and implementing the interplay between the visible and the readable.

Through this interplay, the contribution of knowledge is to be seen in the formula that brings together cinematic images categories such as contemporary video art, anthropological documentaries, pop music video clips and experimental films in a renewed film practice, referred to as Turbo Films.

The joint progression of praxis and conceptual movement, within a discourse on the current status of moving images is inspired by Gilles Deleuze definition of intensities:

“They are no longer ‘concepts of’, understood by reference to their external object. They are exactly like sounds, colors, or images; they are intensities which either suit you or don’t. [...] Concepts are the images of thought. Therefore it is not a question of reflecting on cinema, it is normal that philosophy produces concepts which are in resonance with the pictorial images of today or with cinematographic images.”⁷

In synthesis, following Deleuze’s perspective, new concepts are invented (or thought) and subsequently put to work in the cinematic experience. It is this trajectory through which filmmaking as well as conceptual art is intended as a philosophical experience.

I will analyze each proposed Turbo Film, trying to underline the creative process as well as the theoretical framework behind the key elements of each film. I will describe the context in which these elements are deployed and how they circulated, as different organisms of the same species.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, p. xiii (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983)

5. Premises

5.1 Questioning the Word 'Apparatus'

In the attempt to define the complex system of actions, theories and situations behind the structure of a Turbo Film, I would like to first clarify how I intend the word "apparatus" used in the title of my dissertation.

To explain the theoretical implications that the word 'Apparatus' has in this context, it is necessary to take a distance from what is known, in cinema studies, as 'apparatus theory' as first presented in the text: "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" (1975), by the French philosopher and film theorist Jean-Louis Baudry.

Baudry studied the intersection between ideology and the technology of cinema as social institution; his 'basic apparatus' was the hardware of the cinema machine and was supported by the 'dispositif' that was the immaterial system, the ideological construction behind the subject.⁸ Over time, the crucial distinction in cinema theory, between 'apparatus' and 'dispositif' was lost in translation.

In fact, the word apparatus has a polysemic nature in English, it is synonymous with device or appliance, while in cinema theory it can be used to translate the French term "dispositif." It can therefore refer to both the technique employed, developed, and displaced, as well as the context from which it is constructed.

As the epistemological distinction between the words Apparatus and 'dispositif' are not easily traced in the English translation, it is important not only to determine the meaning of the term Apparatus to which I am referring, but also to investigate the reasons and the implications behind my decision to use this term.⁹

8 Jean-Louis Baudry. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema", in *A Film Theory Reader, Narrative Apparatus, Ideology*, edited by Philip Rosen, p. 286-299 (Columbia University Press, New York, 1986)

9 Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, "The Cinematic Apparatus", p.213-224 (New York: St Martin's, 1980). Philip Rosen, "Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader", p. 299-318 (New York: Columbia UP, 1986)

My aim it is to move away from the historically circumscribed use of the notion of apparatus by the 'apparatus theory,' revitalizing the term by opening it up to an approach that implies a method for discursive analysis supported by an epistemological practice. In this sense my use of the term is closer to the French word 'dispositif', but as far as possible from the power structures described by Foucault. An apparatus consolidates a system established between elements in a heterogeneous group.¹⁰

I propose emancipation from the historical uses of the French term in film theory and the development of 'new' uses and methods in today new-media environment, yet with the historicity of the term in mind.

I intend to use the term "apparatus" to refer to an organic and alive ensemble of practices and epistemological analysis. A response to an urgency or a state of emergency, I intend the term "apparatus" as a sort of guideline¹¹ that can respond to an urgent need in a specific given moment.

A deploying device. A trigger for the production of meaning and the manipulation of power structures and 'aesthetic regimes'. An epistemological set of processes that enable us to react, rethink, reinvent and manipulate cinema and moving images, in dialogue with the complexity of visual culture today. An apparatus that is imagined as part of a constellation of similar entities, what Thomas Elsaesser defines as Art of apparatuses:

"The current proximity of cinema, media art and visual culture in general produces what we might call an 'art of apparatuses' which establishes itself according to different kinds of logics—as mechanisms of resistance, of new subjectivities and novel experiences. A new aesthetic paradigm, made by the multiplicities and hybridities of the apparatus nature."¹²

10 Michel Foucault "The Confession of the Flesh", in "Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings", edited by Colin Gordon, p.194-209 (Pantheon Books, New York, 1980)

11 An approach similar to the one of Thomas Elsaesser with the term "dispositif" in "Between Knowing and Believing: The Cinematic Dispositive after Cinema", in *Cine-Dispositives: Essays in Epistemology Across Media*, by Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada, p. 46-92 (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2015)

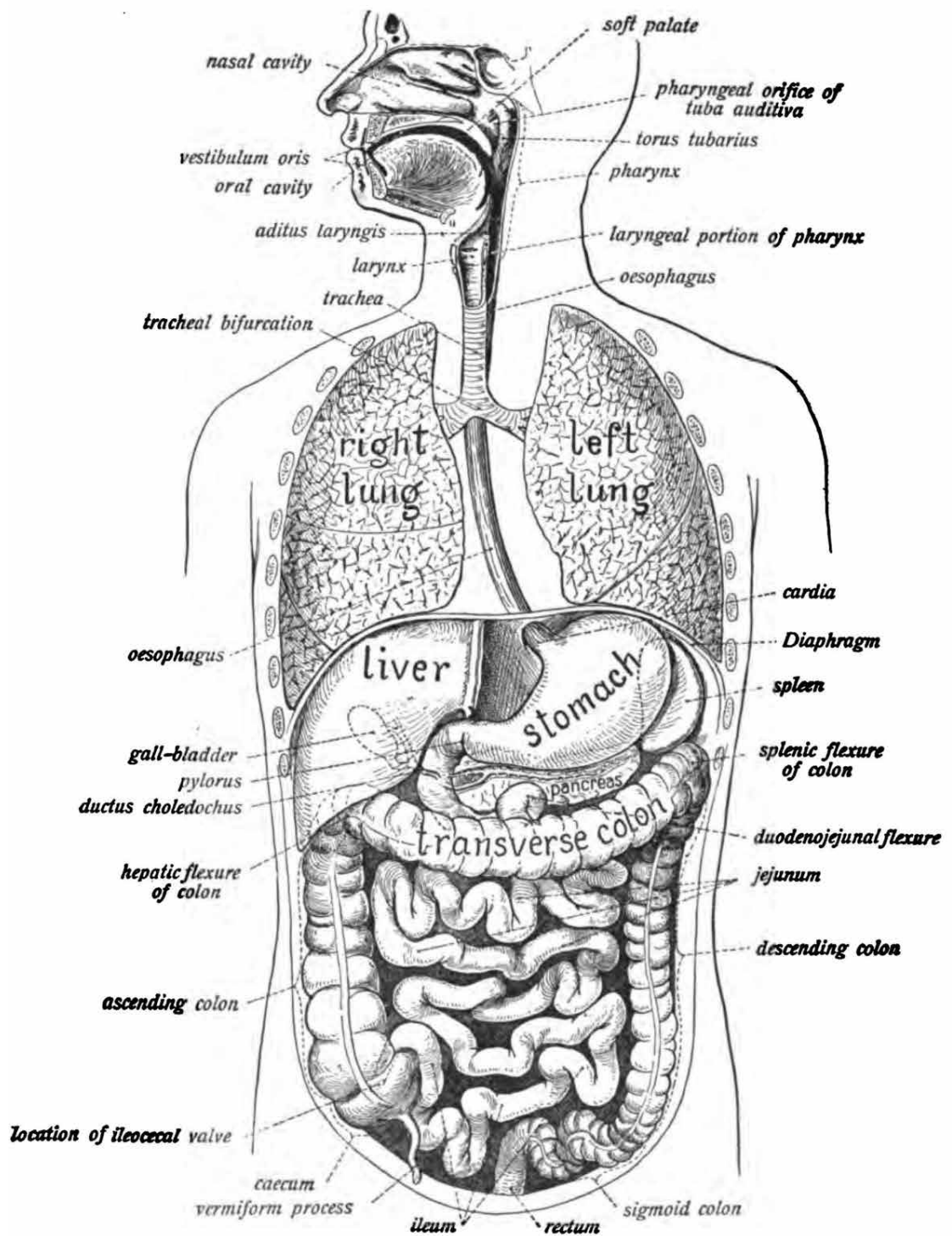
12 Thomas Elsaesser, "Between Knowing and Believing: The Cinematic Dispositive after Cinema", in *Cine-Dispositives: Essays in Epistemology Across Media*, by Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada, p. 46-92 (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2015)

I find similarities here to what Lev Manovich refers to as 'cultural interface' when speaking of today Cinema:

"Despite frequent pronouncements that cinema is dead, it is actually on its own way to becoming a general purpose cultural interface, a set of techniques and tools which can be used to interact with any cultural data. [...] "Cinema" [here] includes mobile camera, representation of space, editing techniques, narrative conventions, activity of a spectator – in short, different elements of cinematic perception, language and reception. "¹³

In biology, the digestive apparatus is defined as a system of organs able to keep the body healthy by assimilating and processing substances into energy. We may even imagine a cinematic apparatus that function as a digestive one, transforming matter into energy through a slow process of selecting and recombining elements. An apparatus as trigger for the production of open cinematic discourses; an organic and integrative whole, able to reshape and reinvent itself by drawing connections between disparate agents, sites, and practices, by identifying common denominators between and across media.

13 Lev Manovich, *"The Language of New Media"* p.78-81 (MIT Press,Cambridge, 2001). See also <http://www.manovich.net/TEXT/cinema-cultural.html> (last accessed on February 4, 2013).



the human digestive system

52 Why 'Turbo'?

turbo -are - <to disturb, throw into disorder or confusion; to upset>; esp. <to cause political disturbance, to unsettle>.

Hence partic. as adj. *turbatus* -a -um, <disturbed, disordered, restless, troubled>; sometimes <angered, exasperated>;¹⁴

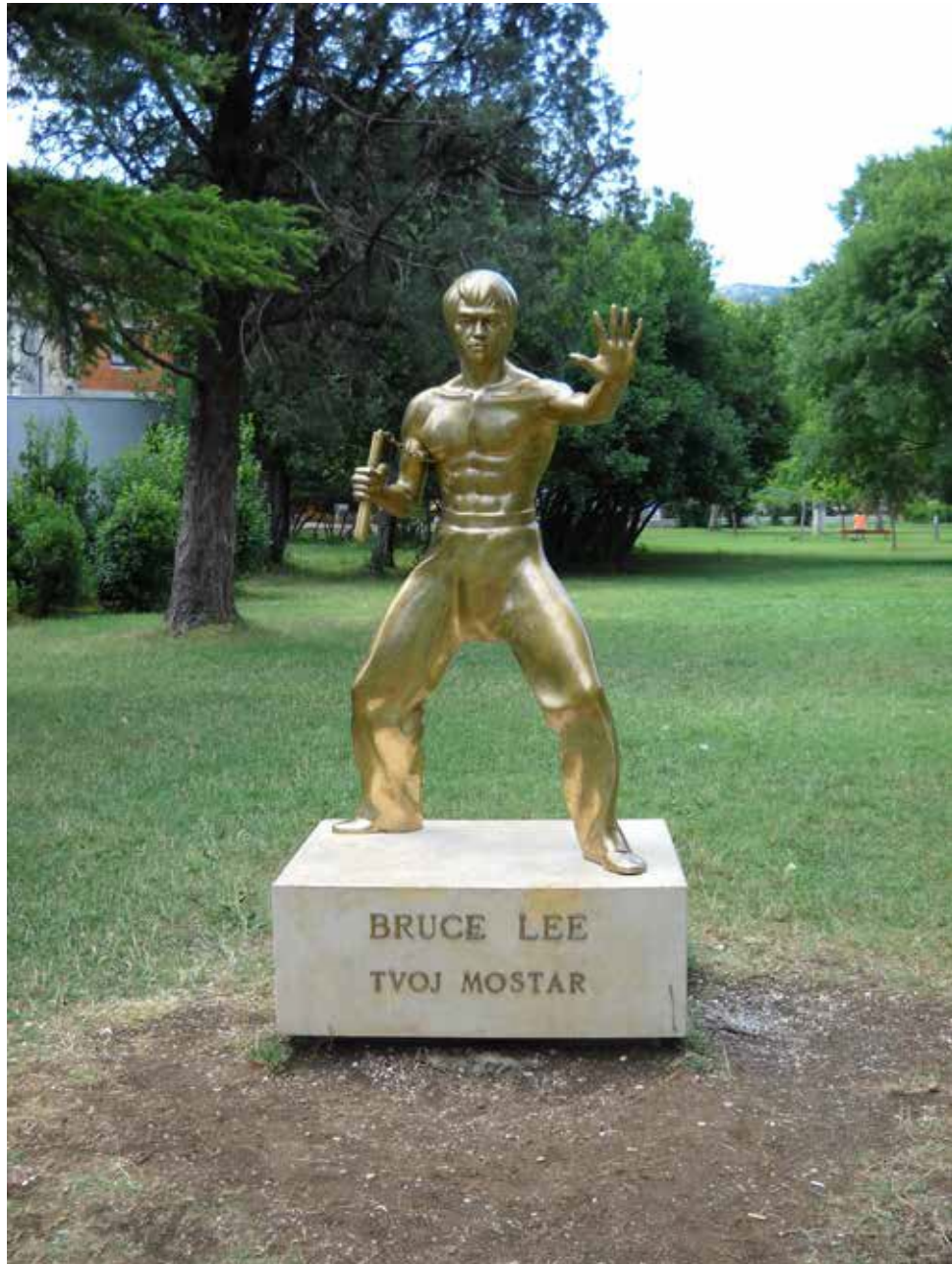
Applied to our film practice the term Turbo refers to a state of emergency in which we exasperate any aspect of the process. A spinning wheel that accelerates and empowers. The 'Turbo discipline' in filmmaking is a process based practice, that sets off from our ability to use what's available, from the awareness that, in whatever context you may come into contact, even if it might not seem interesting, trueness is actually concealed in unexpected scenarios. This freedom, embedded within the narration, triggers unique conditions overloaded with energy. The Turbo practice arises from a state of emergency, from the need to move a mountain just by the use of our own arms, all this sets in motion the necessity to change, hopefully to your own advantage, what might seem to be a lost cause on paper, but most of all by turning your tough luck into a strength. The state of emergency makes us alert; we realize we must act swiftly and in the shortest lapse of time. This process generates a lot of collective and performative energy. That's what makes it Turbo. The set of a Turbo Film is a collective performance in constant state of emergency, a flow in which the most different kinds of humanities are involved, ready to be stressed mentally and physically, in an eternal bacchanal in which everything melts into each other reaching a state of exhaustion.

Domenico Quaranta, an art curator that followed my practice defines the process as follow:

"A Turbo Film is basically a tool of exploration, understanding and knowledge. Turbo Film Practice understood that you can get much more of a situation, a community, a place by setting up a carnival-like situation, in which people get more relaxed and friendly, performance anxiety is put aside, and cultural differences are replaced by the basic human need to enjoy life together. Paololuca Barbieri Marchi also understood that he is very good in doing it, and that he, together with his collective Alterazioni Video, like it immensely.

14 Peter L. Corrigan, "College Latin", p. 415 (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2015)

That's why they don't give too much importance to the script, they never do a scene twice, they casually mix together poor images and high quality footage and they change the movies after the first release, reworking the plot again and again. The making of the film does not have to interfere with the life situation they set up, because it's actually the result of it"¹⁵



Bruce Lee Gold Statue, Mostar, Bosnia, 2005. A typical example of Turbo Folk statue as a symbol of solidarity in the ethnically divided city.

15 Domenico Quaranta "It Has To Be Fun" in 'Turbo Film and the Uncertain future of moving images', p.7 (Editore Fausto Lupetti, Milano, 2016).

5.3 Rethinking Collaborative authorship: Alterazioni Video art collective.

Alterazioni Video is an art collective that I co-founded with Alberto Caffarelli in early 2003. The group that since then is been working together is composed by 5 artists with totally different backgrounds. Giacomo Porfiri is a musician with the passion for building unstable structures, Andrea Masu when he first joined the collective had a background as media activists being one of the founders of Indymedia Italy, with years on his shoulders as political media activists and with a passion for experimental theater.

Alberto Caffarelli is a talented filmmaker with an obsession for image manipulation and imaginative outcomes, Matteo Erenbourg is a creative mind with no fixed position in the world of image creation, he is considered in the collective what in early cinema was called the “wildie”, which was, the guy on set that comes out with unexpected ideas in the wrong moments and by doing so, helps keeping the work interesting.

We decided from the beginning to keep an horizontal structure in terms of decision making and artistic direction, to empower our multisided nature.

We set some guidelines: the main goal of each project would have been escaping and redefining boundaries of the art practice by intending the exhibition context as a media amplification platform. Using the art world as radio station, we had the chance to get our ideas or unexpected visions on magazines, newspapers, television, public institutions, Universities and so on . In the years that preceded the proliferation of social media and video platform such as YouTube we as a multifaceted collective were already thinking in terms of visual culture, and the art world had just a lateral part in it. We were seeing art production as a reinvigorated form of cultural resistance.

The obsessive attention of the art world for new aesthetic discourses gave us the opportunity while playing with the image to follow our “political agenda” and to generate alternative narratives.

Our friends at the time were Franco and Eva Mattes aka 01.org, the Wu Ming, Luther Blisset the Yes man among others. We were sharing attitudes and references while getting inspired. They were authors working in different fields and with different strategies and languages but all sharing a similar critical attitude towards power structures and all with a tendency to manipulate languages and

contexts in order to create displacement and new forms of cultural resistance.

Each member of the collective has the ability and rights to change or manipulate a project adding a layer or his perspective to the discourse. Our projects are always open. They are creative experiments that have the function to trigger a fracture or a short circuit in the stream of meaningless information exchange happening in the art world as in the media.

During our Museum exhibition in China, we have been sharing illegal material with university students while disguising the aim of the project by appropriating Alighiero Boetti's aesthetic and create a "dejavu" effect in censors' eyes.



Alterazioni Video

*People who could escapedhave escaped and have people to seek refuge with
(QR code) rayon embroidery on canvas
dimensions 96x96 cm.
2007*



Alterazioni Video
522146150912
(QR code) embroidery rayon on linen
96 X 96 cm.
2008

6. From the Linguistic Turn to the Pictorial Turn.

“Our common culture seems increasingly a product of what we watch rather than what we read.”¹⁶

“We might be able to engage with works, or events, that don’t look like art and don’t count as art, but are somehow electric, energy nodes, attractors, transmitters, conductors of new thinking, new subjectivity and action that visual artwork in the traditional sense is not able to articulate”.¹⁷

To understand what is happening to the contemporary visual culture, we must first look back to twentieth century art history.

From a theoretical point of view the development of our contemporary visual culture is deeply entwined with the history of image production and consequently art history.

Some radical changes in art making have enlarged and re-articulated the very framework and methodologies by which it is produced. Furthermore, in the context of art production and the art market, filmmaking has only recently become considered as an accepted media, imposing itself as a form of art making with its own specific grammar and forms. Artists have used film since they were able to put their hands on it, but filmmakers very rarely screened their work in art spaces. One of the firsts was an Italian film promoted by Duchamp and John Cage, *La Verifica Incerta*, by Barrucchiello and Grifi.¹⁸ Today filmmaking is reshaping art and creating new possibilities for its production and distribution.

This legitimate incursion of moving images into the range of images, more precisely of films into art, is a fairly new event. demonstrated in recent history by the Catherine David’s curatorial presentation of avant-garde film in Documenta, 1997.¹⁹

16 Lynne V. Cheney, *“Humanitas in America: A report to the President, the Congress, and the American People p.17 (Washington DC, National Endowment for the Humanities, 1998).*

17 Sarat Maharaj, *“In Other Words: Daniel Birnbaum Talks with Sarat Maharaj” p.107 (Artforum, New York, February 2002).*

18 Alberto Grifi, Gianfranco Baruchello, *“La Verifica Incerta”, text by Harun Farocki p. 96-97 (Arsenal, Institut fur film und videokunst, Berlin , 2013)*

19 Cathrine Davide, curator of *“Documenta X”, exhibition, Kassel, 1997*

On a more theoretical level, this incursion is evident in the cultural criticism regarding art, cinema, and moving images from many authors from the eighties onward, including G. Deleuze, L. Manovich, W.TJ Michell, D. Martin Jones, Hyto Steyerl, and T. Elsaesser among many others.

The relationship between images and moving images, art and filmmaking, is an ongoing conversation that is continually shifting. With the emersion of a new popular visual culture in “new media” with its own syntaxes, the distinctions between art, film, TV, and commercials, seem rendered as obsolete.

Another reason to begin from a position in art history lies in the fact that the origins of my own practice of film production shares more similarities with the *modus operandi* of art-making rather than traditional filmmaking, although filmmaking practices are shifting with online popular culture.

1.1 ***Conceptual Art and Youtube***

From this perspective, the most significant turn in the history of Western visual culture has involved the artists, ideas, and artworks, working under the umbrella of Conceptual Art; an art that frequently eliminates the production of unique objects in favor of an engagement with ideas. Here language plays a primary role in the attempt to push ideas over visual forms.

The self-recorded and self-celebrating performances by artists like Vito Acconci and Lawrence Weiner, Chris Burden and Tom Marioni, can be seen as setting the stage for today’s user-generated videos on Youtube. These artists were working during a time in which a system like the Internet was just a blurry vision, but they were among the first to purchase early home video recording devices.

Their thoughts about art and life, and their semiotic approach to images in many ways intuited the practices of web 2.0 users.²⁰ They focused on finding creative alternatives to mainstream production for cross platform critical inquiries, while maintaining a sense of corrosive irony and spontaneous action.

²⁰ *Vito Acconci video archive, last accessed 21-10-2015, <http://www.vdb.org/artists/vito-acconci>*

*I began to realize,
as well, that the intelligent and sensitive people in my environment had experiences with nonart portions of their
visual world that were of such quality and consistency that the demarcation of similar experiences as art
(would) make no appreciable difference; that perhaps mankind was beginning to
outgrow the need for art on that level; that he was beginning to deal with his world aesthetically.*
Joseph Kosuth

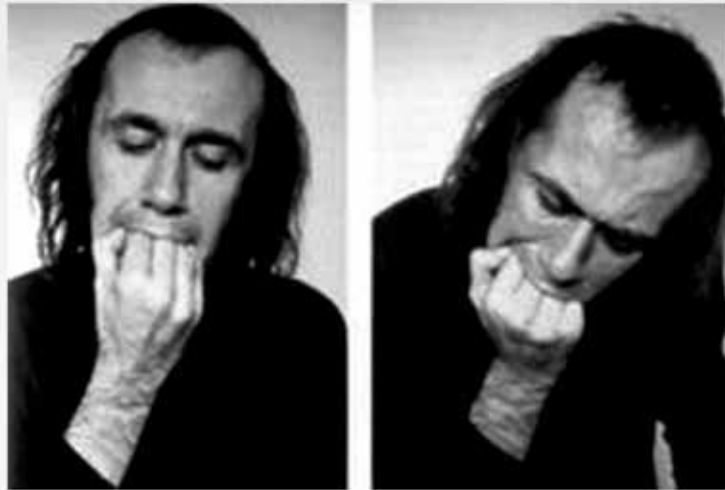


19712010

The Future of the Image, Chapter 3: The (H)as (A)nd (S)as by Paololuca Barbieri Marchi, December 2010, PhD, U.S. Arts, University of Plymouth, U.K.

Paololuca Barbieri Marchi
Lecture 001 - the pictorial turn series
print on canvas
dimensions variable
2012

*In the information society, the world is the frame. Art, in these conditions, has the potential
of being "received" by millions of people at the same time, without a hierarchy of reception.*
Joseph Kosuth, 1968



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Hand and Mouth Piece

1969/2010

The Future of the Image, Chapter 3: The Hand, Mouth, Eye by Paololuca Barbieri Marchi, December 2010, PhD, M. Arts, University of Plymouth, U.K.

Paololuca Barbieri Marchi
Lecture 005 - the pictorial turn series
print on canvas
dimensions variable
2012

These early conceptual artists radically questioned the art-space itself and expanded, pushed, and shared their practices in differing contexts such as magazines, private houses, public spaces and through different media.

Their attitude erased conceptually the distance between high and low art and empowered new forms of production, intuitively preparing the basis for what is known today as Visual Culture.

Douglas Huebler once stated: 'We were making art through joking rather than sensuality!'²¹ They acted out a detachment from the sensual spectacle of society that still resonates in today's commodification of art and culture. Their attitude has been passed on to and absorbed by the general users of networked visual culture more than today's artists themselves.

There is a battle in the realm of images between economic value versus speed value, possession versus circulation, capital versus information. To escape this commodification, conceptual artists turned to language and ideas: 'Artist have finally accepted as Idea man and not only as craftsmen with poetic thoughts' affirmed Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 Newsweek interview in.²²

Tony Godfrey in his amazing book on the history of Conceptual art, describes it as follows:

"Not just the status of the object was questioned but the one of language too. [...] Conceptual art is not about forms or materials, but about ideas and meanings. It cannot be defined by terms of any medium or style, but rather by the way it questions what art and the production of contents more in general is. Artists work with meaning, not with shapes, colors, or materials.

[...] Conceptual art was always dialectical, being made in response to both its institutional and its political context, attempting often to make these contexts evident and sometimes actually to change them.

[...] Because the Work does not take a traditional form it demands a more active response from the viewer, indeed it could be argued that the Conceptual work of art only truly exists in the viewer's mental participation."²³

21 Alexander Alberro, *"Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity"*, (MIT Press, Boston, 2003), p.65.

22 *ibidem*, p.33.

23 Tony Godfrey, *"Conceptual Art A&I (Art and Ideas)"* p. 121-143 (Phaidon, New York, 1998).

We have a record of the first attempts, in contemporary art, of this interplay between text and images in Duchamp's early work *LHOOQ*, the Mona Lisa piece. With *LHOOQ*, Duchamp attacked the cult of the artist as genius by turning a reproduction into one of the most representative artwork of the XX century.

The linguistic turn defined by Richard Rorty²⁴ has been the lens through which all conceptualist experiences from the 60s' and 70s' can be read. This linguistic turn was driven by ideas over objects, in which the world became the strongest and fastest medium. In a conversation with Alterazioni Video, the Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson explained how conceptual art was the only art known in the island because it could be experienced by phone without the need of images or objects.²⁵

"Conceptual Art completed the break with traditional aesthetics initiated by Dadaists. Traditional aesthetics could never quite recuperate from the assault of ready-mades and the linguistic turn,"²⁶ states Alberro. I would add that we most likely won't be able to overcome the *visual turn* for a long time to come.

In the seventies, Joseph Kosuth was able to envision a society of self-aware image makers. He wrote:

"I began to realize, as well, that the intelligent and sensitive people in my environment had experiences with non-art portions of their visual world that were of such quality and consistency that the demarcation of similar experiences as art would make no appreciable difference; that perhaps mankind was beginning to outgrow the need for art on that level; that he was beginning to deal with his world aesthetically."²⁷

24 Richard Rorty, "Linguistic Turn" p. 63-64 (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967).

25 Alterazioni Video in Skype Call with Ragnar Kjartansson during the pre-production of *Symphony N.1*, (Performa 09, New York, 2011).

26 Alexander Alberro, "*Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*" p. 35 (MIT Press, Boston, 2003).

27 Alexander Alberro, "*Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*" p.57 (MIT Press, Boston, 2003).

For JT Mitchell, the shift towards a visual culture has considerably changed our attitudes towards the sourcing and utilization of imagery. In contrast to the reactionary and radical motivations that led to appropriative strategies in the 1960s and 1970s, the re-use and remixing of cultural information in contemporary culture seems more of an involuntary by-product of our environment.²⁸

1.2 Vampyroteuthis and Digital Patterns

By understanding the appropriative nature of contemporary culture as an arena for sharing, we can come to consider artworks as mere coordinates on a vast grid. This grid expands even further if we think about moving images. It becomes a deep ocean, where waves beat time; an ocean that we only partly know, inhabited by monstrous beings.

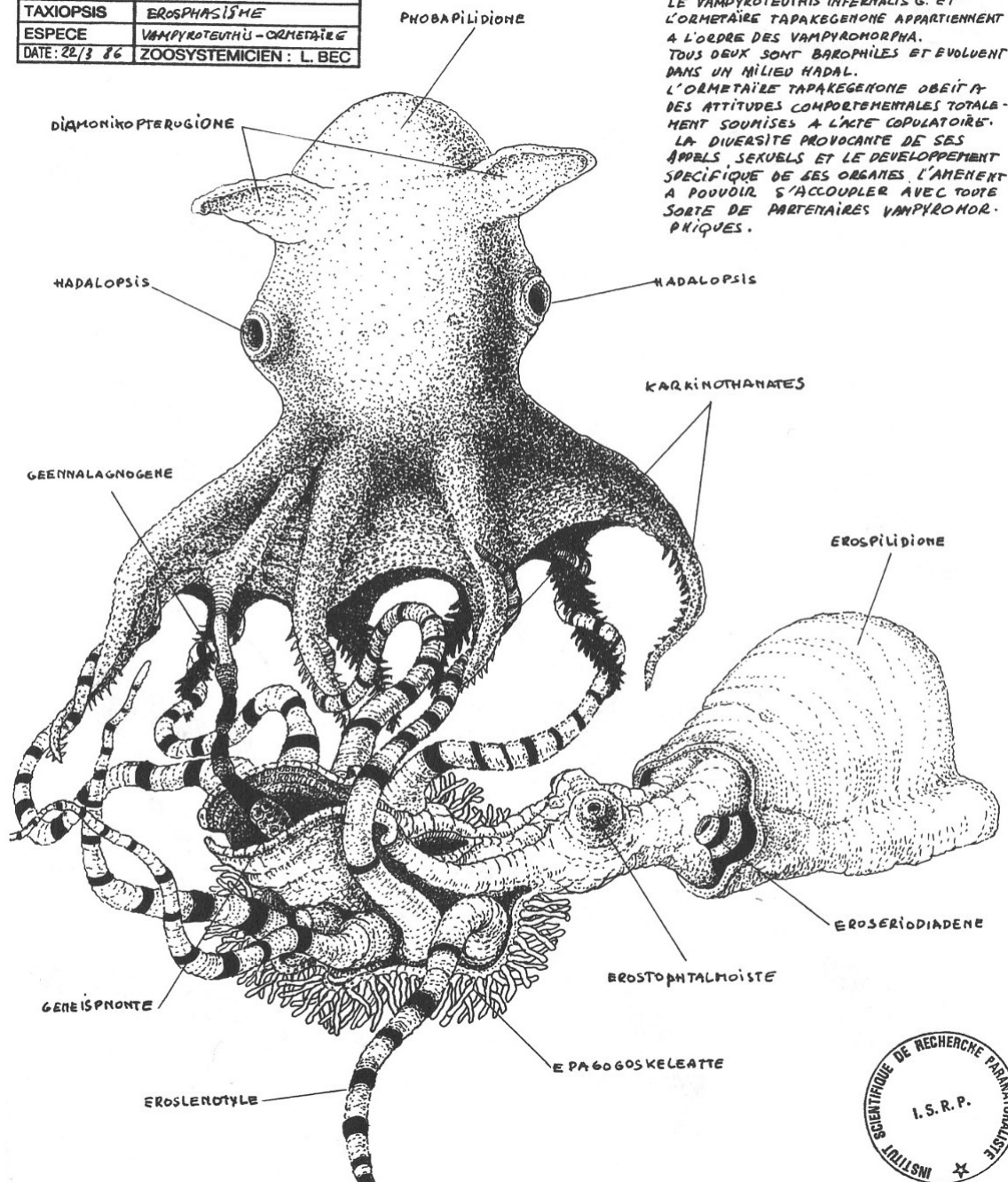
This new artist's landscape recalls a visionary text of philosophical fiction written by Villiem Flusser in the early eighties, the *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis*. The text describes a giant squid with bioluminescence powers that he uses to orientate, hunt, and attract mates. By studying the way he records and transmits bioluminescent color codes, the philosopher envisions a dimension of immaterial creation that is very similar to today's digital realm. Flusser focuses on the squid's skin codes and memory to envision what would soon become the network culture in the digital era:

"The strategy of the art of the Vampyroteuthis, for example, his skin paintings, can be sketched as follows: he experiences something new and attempts to store this new thing in his memory, to assign it a place next to the information already there. He determines that the new thing cannot be classified, that it doesn't fit. His thoughts have to be rearranged; they have to be adapted to the new experience. His mind is shocked by the new thing, which has to be worked through (what we humans call "creative activity"). This creative astonishment flows through his entire organism; it captures him, and the chromatophores on his skin surface contract and secrete pigments. At the same time he experiences an artistic orgasm, during which the ejaculated colors on the skin are presented in vampyroteuthic code.

28 W.T.J. Mitchell, "*What do pictures want?*", p.93-97 (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005).

INSTITUT SCIENTIFIQUE DE RECHERCHE PARAMATURALISTE		
V	upokrinomenes	10
	MONOGRAPHIE	
TAXONOMIE	AIRES HYPOCRISIQUES	
PRODOTIQUE	upokrimenologie	
ZOOTOPIE	HADAL	
TAXIOPSIS	EROSPHASISME	
ESPECE	VAMPYROTEUTHIS - ORMETAIRE	
DATE: 22/3 86	ZOOSYSTEMICIEN : L. BEC	

VAMPYROTEUTHIS INFERNALIS G. ORMETAIRE TAPAKEGENONE



Flusser Vilém, *Vampyroteuthis infernalis* [1981-1987], translated by Christophe Lucchese, Bruxelles, Zones sensibles, 2015.

His partner is provoked and made curious by the new thing articulated in this way. This curiosity seduces the mate to copulate. It becomes a dialogue, during which the new experience will also enter the mind of the partner, to be stored there. How it moves to other vampyroteuthes, how it becomes part of the general vampyroteuthic dialog, cannot be ascertained here. But in any case, the newly acquired information has been taken up by the vampyroteuthic dialogue - and as long as there are vampyroteuthes, it will be retained. As with the color changing glands on the skin of the infernal squid, the pixel of a monitor allow us to create and transmit immaterial art.”²⁹

Today we are sensually attracted to images and we transmit them more on impulse/instinct rather than thought. As Seth Price reminds us in his text *Dispersion*,³⁰ today the artist no longer has to stand against objects in favor of language, as it was for the conceptualists of the previous generation. The artist doesn't have to stand for or against anything in particular, and is instead able to focus on renegotiating his relationship to his audience, privileging context and reframing.³¹

In Flusser's metaphor, the squid attracts mates by creating a catalogue of spectacles. These images are then transmitted through an orgiastic experience, to then become part of the memory of the female and their offspring. We can say that digital visual culture acts in similar ways to the creative processes of the 'devil squid'. The most spectacular thing is the most attractive thing, to be shared and produced on an instinctual, sensual basis. The offspring take the form of new media products: remixed versions of an encounter, as images or a sequence of images that travel like parasites through other organisms to have a life cycle of their own. The artist in this environment should become the expert of new media production, and should be viewed as the one who enters into this transmission stream and actually slows it down by intellectualizing and questioning what is being transmitted, rather than simply passing it on. This could be the reason artists are losing out, as most of the audience isn't attracted to this close attention, but wants a more instant and distracted spectacle. That is to say the amateur audience are like sluts, looking for cheap squid sex with the first pretty mate while the artist might still be looking for the best mate.

29 Vilem Flusser, *Excerpt from 'Vampyroteuthis Infernalis: A treatise along with a report from the Institut Scientifique de Recherche Paranaturaliste'*, hg. von Andreas Müller-Pohle, translated by Anne Popiel. p. 52-58, (Göttingen, *European Photography*, 2002).

30 Seth Price, "Dispersion", Paperback, New York, 2008, p. 1.

31 *ibidem*, p.5.

1.3 *The Artist as Media Surfer*

The artist, in the visual culture, paradoxically is able to escape the everyday pornography of what Baudrillard calls the aestheticized banality of everything else referring to art,³² and become the one who slows things down. By carefully entering new contexts and creating counter-intuitive currents, the artist can contribute levels of intellectual analysis (discourse) back into the sexualized/pulsional media spectacle, without negating it or being against it, but actually absorbing it in a never ending exchange.

For the artist, the visual culture today resembles a deep blue yonder, inhabited by giant creatures and few infernal squids, an environment where it's easy to disappear.

The solution to this ongoing situation lies in the dynamics of new media and web culture with its constant innovation, energy and unpredictability. The fact that the world of social media is producing, sharing, and downloading millions of media objects every day is, for Manovich, a threat to the artist himself, who could struggle to maintain his status and survive the extreme democratization of media production and media access. Manovich asks in his book *Software Takes Command*,³³ what if the value of the expanding opportunities that the networked visual culture brings to art and artists is actually limiting the artists activity?

The answer to this question should be found in the ability of future artists to continually adapt to an always already new environment³⁴ and reinvent their position in visual discourses.

32 Jean Baudrillard, *"The Conspiracy of Art"* p.52 (Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2005).

33 Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command (International Texts in Critical Media Aesthetics)* p.286-289 (Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, New York, 2013).

34 Monico Francesco, *Lexicon* p. 104. Word n.72 Always Already New.

1.4 *Living Images*

While the role of the artist is under a lot of pressure, we could even imagine the eventuality of a post-human visual environment, asking ourselves if images could be seen as life forms.

Has the image now become the infernal squid, do images propagate themselves? Do they have their own DNA? Are we becoming just observers? Has the parasite become the host?

W.T.J. Mitchell, in his book *What Do Pictures Want?* suggests that perhaps we should consider images as living beings and try to comprehend them on their own terms, situate them within their life-histories and environments, study their effects and after-life, and try to detect their mysteries, proceeding as a kind of biologist.

"If images are life-forms, and objects are the bodies they animate, then media are the habitats or ecosystems in which pictures come alive."³⁵

Using the example of the Velociraptor scene from the film *Jurassic Park*, Mitchell focuses on the animist tradition towards images. For the author, *Jurassic Park* represents the cultural fear that images would finally be able to come alive, as screened in the manifesto and last image of the movie suggesting that, as a result of new media and technological devices, images could free themselves from whatever control we may think to have over them.

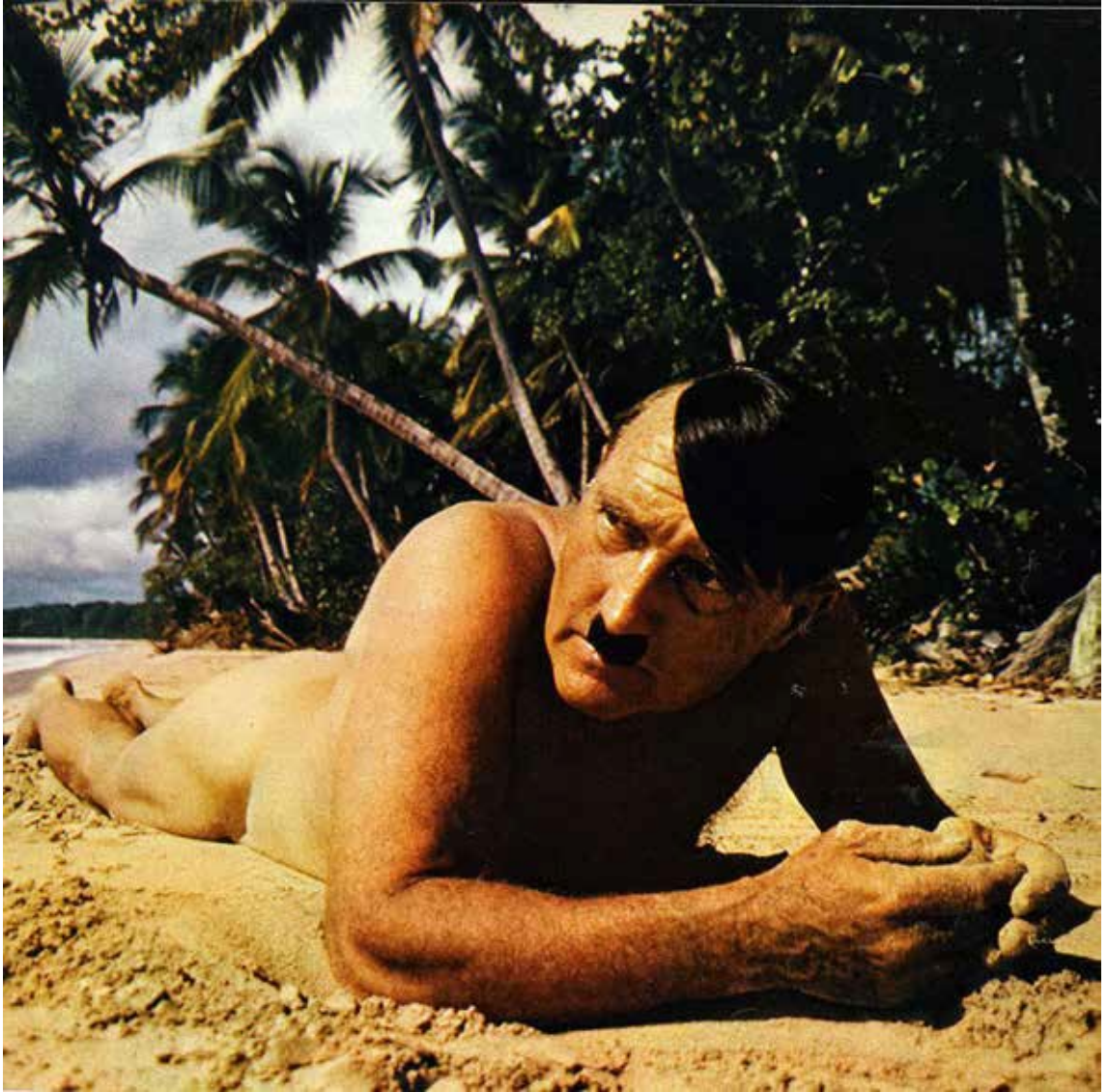
If we take the Jurassic Velociraptor, described by Mitchell, in the scene in which it breaks into a screening room and has the image of his DNA code projected onto its face, and compare it to the Flusserian 'infernal squid', with its creative powers and dispersion strategies, able to color-code his memories and transmit them to his mates through an orgiastic interaction, we note that the two images share a number of odd echoic relations.

³⁵ William John Thomas Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, p.198 (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005).

Two terrific animals, free from human control. Two monsters through which it is easy to envision a post-human future. Mitchell reminds us how animals always had a long-established relationship with futurity in human mind, used, since the beginning of society, for rituals and divinations with heteromorphic gods as the Egyptian Toth, Seth, Bastet or the famous Greek Pan.

Like in the visual realm of contemporary society, both animals have a strong relationship with technology. The squid, metaphorically, demonstrates through his intercourse the grassroots nature of the digital realm, and the velociraptor represents the real accomplishment of technology, that is to generate life itself.

Immersed in this heteromorphic populated environment, we could envision ourselves as hunters, where the images are the preys that can seduce and attack us; dangerous beasts that require us to understand the organic nature of the ecosystem in which they live.



*The National Lampoon Magazine, New York, 1967.
This image became in recent years a world wide meme. It's life is morfed in new
context and platforms, up to becoming the pillar of a conspiracy theory. Was made by
Douglas Kenney for his satirical magazine.*

7. Art and Life: The Post-Human Horizon

“Style is the answer to everything.

A fresh way to approach a dull or dangerous thing

To do a dull thing with style is preferable to doing a dangerous thing without it.

To do a dangerous thing with style is what I call art”³⁶

As well described by Thomas Elsaesser, “post-human thinking privileges patterns over matter and information systems over material body, to the point that our embodiment is seen as an accident, rather than a fatalistic spiritual mystery. Consciousness is also seen as a random causality, an epiphenomenon that took place in evolution, so that our bodies are seen as an open process where parts can be changed and modified. If we try to understand the future of moving images

in the post-cinema era we have to start to disembody the cinematic corpus of film and treat it as a database of information through which we can define different patterns and trajectories. In the post-human horizon, we expect a world without art, at least as we know it. A place where human expression and representation could easily disappear, leaving place to intelligent and expressive self-learning machines, as beautiful and cold as death.”³⁷

If moving images become generated automatically from self-learning machines in a dialogue with nature, human beings would return to the role of observer, unable to react before the grandiosity of a post-human spectacle.

36 Charles Bukowski, “Style” On poems and insults, audio recording (San Francisco, CA Bitter Lemon Records 1975).

37 Thomas Elsaesser, ‘*Constructive Instability*’, or: *The Life of Things as the Cinema’s Afterlife?*, in “*Video Vortex Reader*” edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer p. 16 (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).



Cloned monkeys are the closest thing to a human being copy and paste scenario. Jurassic Park represents the fear of images coming to life.

1.1 *Life as Art*

The conceptualist artists were focused in closing the gap between art and life by making and suggesting an art that was closer to life. When Hoebler³⁸ was considering a map for a short trip upstate New York, as an artwork, he was suggesting to his audience a real experience; a life experience deduced by the art original idea. This practice recalls Pasolini's approach,³⁹ who aimed to represent reality with reality, or the motto of Alighiero Boetti who stated "Mettere al Mondo il Mondo."⁴⁰ From their perspective, digital technologies and the visual culture would fulfill their wildest dreams, with an entire community engaged in aesthetic representation, philosophical speculation, and horizontal sharing of imaginaries. What kind of environments will be created by the expanding power and sophistication of intelligent, self-regulating machines? How do we fit into it?

Is style, the one that Bukowski refers to in his poem, the only thing that distinguish us from intelligent machines? Can machines reproduce style?

On the other side, there is no longer a need to fight for art practices that are closer to life. Art has already become a part of daily life as a surrogate of exclusive fashion and industrial design.

Today, the relation between art and life seems to be inverted. As Elsaesser points out while trying to identify a trajectory for the future of avant-gardes,⁴¹ today life is getting closer to art and not the other way around.

"[...] Life does indeed look more like art, and this in three distinct ways; firstly, in the Western world, everyday life has in almost all its aspects fallen under the regime of style, it has become the very term of our self-determination and self-reference as individuals and as political collectives: we want to take control of our life by giving it shape and design, not just by 'preserving it' as long as possible, but to improve, maximize, optimize it."⁴²

Elsaesser underlines how, from a post-human perspective, self-learning and self-

38 Douglas Huebler, Haverhill-Windham _New York Market place, 1968.

39 Pier Paolo Pasolini, "A future Life" (Associazione fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rome, 1989).

40 Alighiero Boetti, "Mettere al Mondo il Mondo", ink on paper, Turin, 1972. Referring to art, a possible translation could be: Give birth to the World through the World.

41 Thomas Elsaesser, "'Constructive Instability', or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?", in "Video Vortex Reader" edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

42 Thomas Elsaesser, " 'Constructive Instability', or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?", in "Video Vortex Reader" edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Nie-

regulating platforms such as Wikipedia will be producers of cultural knowledge, through a cyclical process of repetition. However, self-regulatory systems are often unstable in their nature. Elsaesser argues that the next avant-garde must come to terms with “constructive instabilities” and develop a poetic of “performed failures,” by writing the concept of failure into the narrative of post-human hybridization between art and life. He imagines a number of performed failures created by the artist to interfere in the stream of the spectacle of visual culture, slowing down the instinctual and erotic process of consuming and producing media objects, by adding to the discourse new perspectives and analytical paradigms.

Today artists seem to be held in an inter-zone, an uncanny valley where, like eugenics psychiatrists, they come up with radical solutions and discourses without actually influencing the ongoing visual stream.

Their role needs to be reconfigured in a dialectical confrontation with the community that tends to forget about them. The organic natural patterns that lie behind the proliferation of media objects can be noted in sharing-content-platforms such as YouTube, with its ludic, participatory, empowering, and humbling contents. Platforms that could already be seen as macro-organisms, containing and self-generating unidentified narrative objects that, through a process of failures and improvised encounters are building the roots of what could be called cinema after cinema; ‘a cinema intended as a mean without end’.⁴³

“Art will be the very bearer of life, by being the guardian of life’s own antinomy: what Freud called ‘the death drive’, the energy behind repetition and redundancy.

[...] The telos of entropy it suspends us between infinity and indefiniteness, a state only made bearable or even pleasurable, thanks to the subversive balancing act of art.”⁴⁴

derer p. 15 (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

43 John Kelsey, *Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art* p. 121 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

44 Thomas Elsaesser, “ ‘Constructive Instability’, or: *The Life of Things as the Cinema’s Afterlife?*”, in *Video Vortex Reader* edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer p. 31 (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

8. From Images to Moving Images.

Go ahead, Tonino, put on,
a fifty, don't be afraid
to overexpose — let's do
this tracking shot against nature!⁴⁵

We have been exploring possible futures of the artist and of his environment. Here, I would like to change the perspective from art theory to cinema studies, with the discourse of the moving image as a constant.

By switching the focus from art and new media theory to film theory, we must remember how these different research fields are deeply entwined in what is known as visual culture.

1.1 *From Art to Cinema and Back: A Personal Journey*

I started my career working as an young artist, moving towards filmmaking after several years. It's been a natural process that took me from the studio to the set. This instinct started from a growing lack of physical space and became a shared practice with opportunities for a range of encounters that were not possible in my previous experience.

In the last seven years video technologies and online digital distribution platforms have changed the game so radically in ways we are still trying to understand, while millions of new media objects are created and shared around us at any moment.

This shift towards moving images is due to their very nature, open as they are, to continuous manipulation and discursive practice. An editing software, unlike a painter's color palette, never dries up. It's always possible to open a project and rethink it completely, reusing the digital matter as fresh clay. Web users are teaching us every day how to reshape and take control of the trajectories of images through an ironic and truthful manipulation of whatever significant professionals produce. From Fan Fiction users to trolls, from radical groups to haters, no visual content posted online can be sure to be left in peace.

45 Pier Paolo Pasolini, *"A future Life"* p. 175, (Associazione fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rome, 1989).

Software after the Photoshop generation is exponentially increasing the possibilities of moving image manipulation to a level that it is possible to edit a film from a smart phone in few hours. As Kelsey reminds us, Cinema has always been in pieces, from the beginning of its history, but very few have had access to filmmaking equipment and its always been a very costly game. The recent democratization of the filmmaking process simply changes the trajectories of Cinema. Cinema continues to possess the ontological ability to help us gain knowledge about ourselves in the world. Jon Kelsey while presenting his ideas on Cinema after Cinema writes:

“Dismantling cinema and using its materials to construct a contemporary art installation, for example, and then installing this new arrangement in a museum only liberates cinema in order to lose it once again. No matter how immersive and kaleidoscopic the image environment, no matter how cleverly appropriated the material, or how brutally cinema has been fractured or derailed from itself, to encounter moving images in the form of a contemporary art installation only to encounter their usual unavailability in another kind of window shopping. True, cinema has not been itself for some time now - since it went digital - and its recent mutations have been a sort of adventure. It’s easier today than ever before for anybody at all to intervene in its processes, and the free use of cinematic information. But the question is how to use it once you get your hands on it, and what kinds of subjective worlds this free use can make available to us.”⁴⁶

We need to understand which cinematic practices could bring ontological complexity to moving images discourses; which formations or systems of productions could emerge from this described environment. As Rancière explains in the introduction to *The Future of Image*, when discussing cinematic images, “The image is never a simple reality. Cinematic images are primarily operations, relations between the speakable and the visible, ways of playing with the before and the after, cause and effect. These operations involve different image - functions, different meaning of the world ‘image’.”⁴⁷

46 John Kelsey, *Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art* p. 116 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

47 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, translated by Gregory Elliott p. 6 (Verso, London, 2009).

8.1 Time, Action and Attraction

In this complex nature of cinematic images, we must try to understand what will become the new trajectory of cinematic images. The image taxonomy of Gilles Deleuze must first be contextualized to a precise time and place, not because they lack universal meanings, but because, as is noted by Martin Jones in *Deleuze and World Cinema*, the primary focus of Deleuze's texts on cinema are oriented toward European and American films.⁴⁸ A key to understanding Deleuze's taxonomy is his theory of montage. He does not consider montage as a function in service of the construction of a narrative, as it was for most of Hollywood films, rather he considers narrative itself a product of montage.

In his writings on cinema, Deleuze creates a dichotomy in the action-image and the time-image. The action-image replicates the nature of human perception and action, while the time-image expresses a direct image of time. The time-image allows for a sporadic montage, in which a scene, detached from the linear narrative, like a wondering inessential character, provides a 'vertical' perception of time. This is what Deleuze, citing Bergson, refers to as duration. Deleuze describes a cinematic encounter as an ontological experience rather than a representational one.⁴⁹

"The cinematographic concepts are not technical or critical, neither are they linguistic, in the sense in which it has been said that the cinema was the universal language, or in the sense in which has been said the cinema is a language. The cinema seems to be a composition of images and of signs, that is, pre-verbal intelligible content (pure semiotics), while linguistic semiology abolishes the image and tends to dispense with the sign".⁵⁰

48 David Martin Jones, "Deleuze and World Cinemas" (Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011).

49 Gilles Deleuze, "*Cinema 2 The Time Image*" translated by Hugh Tomlison and Robert Galeta p.1 -13 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, ninth printing, 2010).

50 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, p. ix – x (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983).

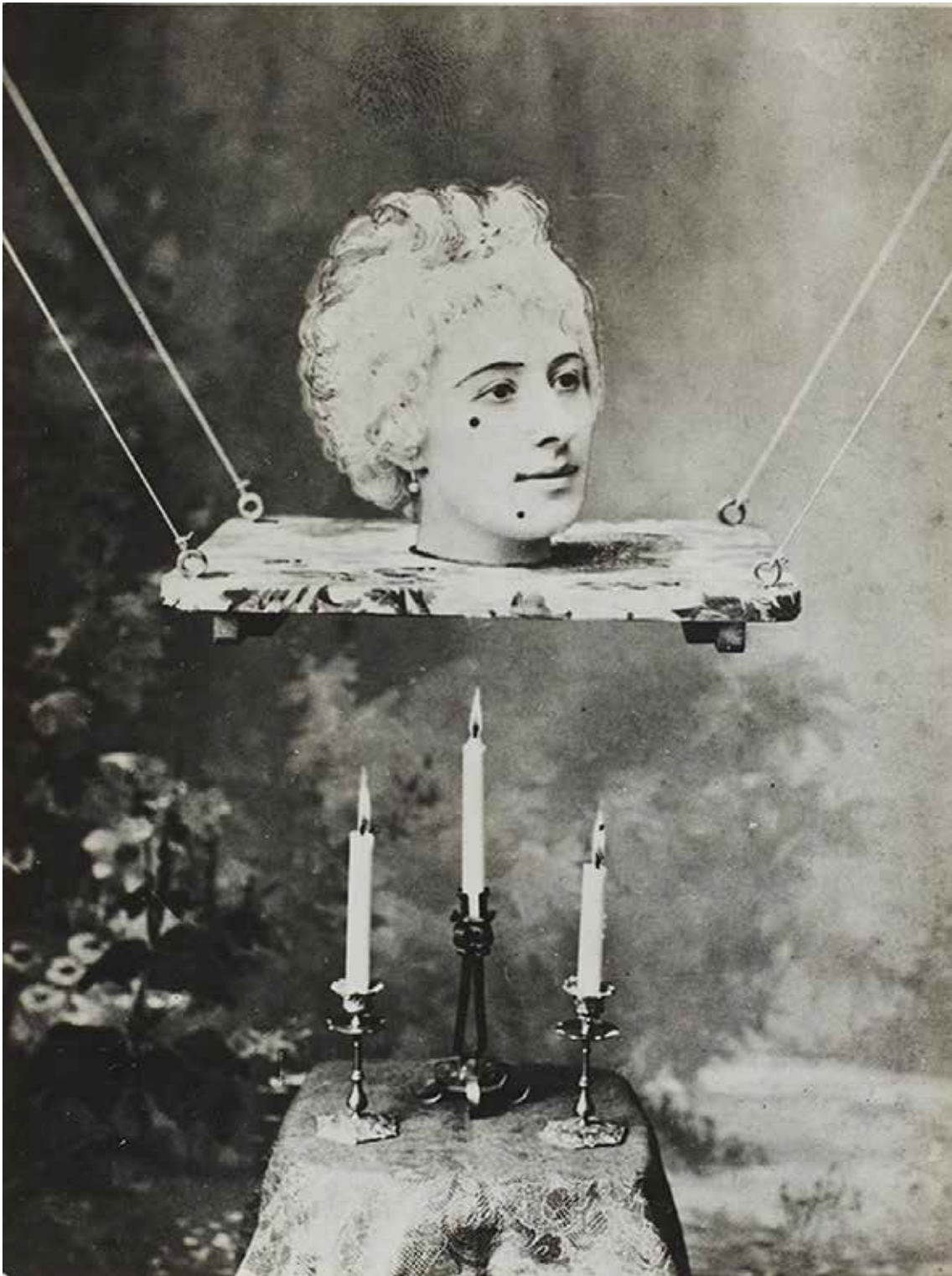
For Deleuze, the mode of operation of modern cinema opened the doors to a new notion of the structure of moving images, and in particular to the introduction of the “irrational” linkage of images that could disrupt the classical structure of philosophical categories such as space and time.

These reflections pave the way to a new philosophy. While ancient and modern philosophy struggled to conceptualize the eternal, cinema represents for Deleuze, another philosophy, able to think in a new way, and seeking singularity in any moment whatsoever. Deleuze, beginning with Bergson’s two ways of conceptualizing time, ‘duration,’ as time considered in the process of transforming or as the universe as an expanding whole, and “time-space,” time as we experience it in everyday life, a linear perception of time and actions, builds a theory on different types of cinema images (two different types of cinemas), movement-image and time-image, with subcategories like action-image, affection-image, perception--image and so on.⁵¹

The movement-image offers an indirect image of time, subordinate to movement, in which cinema re-enacts and represents human perception. The time-image can be perceived in those moments of films where a direct image of time can be found in the intervals between perception and action, a vertical space, detached by linear narration, such as in a flashback or the self-reflection of Antonioni’s characters.

These conceptions are bound to particular kinds of cinema and strongly connected to the context and time in where the books were written. In order to trace a new horizon for image-to-image relations within contemporary visual culture, focusing on my own artistic practice, we must expand the context of Deleuze’s analysis, and try to apply his concepts to a wider range of films.

51 David Martin Jones, “Deleuze and World Cinemas” p.23-27 (Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011).



*A still frame from The Vanishing Lady
an 1898 short film by early filmmaker and illusionist, Georges Méliès*

8.2 *The Attraction Image: In Between Spectacle and Sensation*

Martin Jones attempted a philosophical development of Deleuzian taxonomy. His text critically engages with Deleuze's philosophical work on cinema and it explores ways that Deleuze's ideas can be refined, adapted, and developed in relation to films he did not examine. 'These films are viewed as products of specific historical, cultural, aesthetic and industrial contexts. [...] The major challenge of Deleuze anthropocentric notion of cinema may well lie in the different kinds of time and space now made possible by new digital media.'⁵²

While applying Deleuzian philosophical concepts to new cinematic objects, we need to escape the dualistic approach of Hollywood versus the European film avant-gardes of the sixties and seventies. The future of cinema lies in what will become the cinematic imaginary after film.

Comparing Deleuze's theory to various forms of historic or contemporary cinema, starting from early cinema in the 1920s and moving to popular film genres like Spaghetti Westerns, Martin Jones integrates the image taxonomy of Deleuze with the attraction image, by defining a new category of image, in between the movement-image and the time-image.⁵³ Jones opposes spectacle and sensation to the two stronger "characters" of movement-image, narrative and action, To explain the attraction image, Martin Jones takes as example Méliès trick films. His point is simple. Deleuze affirms that in early cinema there was a lack of montage, the camera was fixed and time was continuous as in movement-images. But in Méliès films there is the impression of a static camera and an absence of montage, but most of the time is an illusion like a magician's trapdoor. Méliès, to make objects appear and disappear, and create the illusion of a trick was forced to use montage techniques.

Here the montage becomes something different from the continuous montage of narrative films and still is not similar to the discontinuous montage of art film and time image. Martin Jones calls it non-continuous montage, a montage used to construct a spectacle. In these early films, if narrative was present, it was often just functioning to connect a series of spectacles, like Méliès train that goes to the moon.

⁵² David Martin Jones, *"Deleuze and World Cinemas"* p. 237 (Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011).

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p.43.

8.3 *The Attraction Image and Turbo Films*

In Turbo Films, like in Méliès films, the stream of spectacles, as well as the convergence of simple tricks (tricks similar to the ones that today can be generated from YouTube tutorials and How-To videos) are stitched together by a very simple narrative structure.

Following Martin Jones' definition of the attraction image we can compare his analysis on Spaghetti westerns to find additional analogies for Turbo Films. For Jones, this genre is characterized by a discontinuous montage and by a de-territorialization of the action, a cinematic version of Marc Augé's "non-places."⁵⁴ These films had an international dimension because of their ability to overpower language with images. This aspect granted a cross-idiomatic and cross-cultural diffusion. The action was happening anywhere. Typically, the protagonist was walking through an unnamed village, in an unknown country, and found himself killing everyone before continuing in his journey to nowhere.⁵⁵ The narrative structure here is very simple. Like in Méliès films, the narrative seems to be just an excuse, a vehicle, for the spectacle to happen. These films had a very particular distribution and fruition. They were shown as third show (terza serata) of the night, which was often the most popular; people would go to the theater to hang out, chat, make jokes, drink. Nobody would really follow the narration, but the attention was always on the film. There was some action, a breasted woman hanging from a tree, a bar fight, a duel, a horse being chased by smoking guns. This was a chain of spectacle that like a virus inhabited the body of the American Western Films, altering them from within.

Spaghetti Westerns were using the classic American Western movie as a stolen car. They were considered a kind of shell, a vehicle by which a more detached and revolutionary kind of film could be made. The main characters were often drop-outs, refused by society. Alone against everyone and any power system, they were unbeatable, anarchic heroes living in a utopian land that could become any place whatsoever.

54 Marc Augé', *"Non-Places: Introduction to an anthropology of Supermodernity"*, translated by John Howe (Verso, London, 1992).

55 Sergio Corbucci, "Django", feature film, B.R.C. Produzione S.R.L., 1966.



Original Film Poster for Django directed by Sergio Corbucci. The first of a long series was released in 1966

These films were revising the American western action film, both ideologically and formally. Their nature was an attraction image with a political message that could appeal internationally. Their protagonists were 'itinerant activists' not so different from Méliès fantasy travelers. Martin Jones, writing about the political and social implication of attraction images in a worldwide context added:

'The episodic form of the attraction image specifically enables these films to comment on issues of relevance to inhabitants of countries experiencing the influence of US ideology during the cold war' ⁵⁶

In Turbo Films, the attraction image is perceivable in a series of spectacles, a 'non continuous movement of the whole' by the use of a non-continuous montage. Differently than in Spaghetti Westerns, the relation of the characters of Turbo Films to the 'milieu' is not decontextualized: it is as strong as in the Deleuzian time-image (like in Neorealism). The location speaks for itself, becomes a protagonist, the way the Rome suburbs were for Pasolini or the desolated countryside for Antonioni.

Locations of Turbo Film are the engine of action, where encounters happen and around which the film shapes itself. Turbo Films often set in motion an array of spectacles where fiction and reality blur through a sequence of 'performative failures',⁵⁷ offering a glimpse of what Bergson understood as "duration,"⁵⁸ which is life itself, a vertical time that emerges from the film timeline, a multilayered attraction image that has in its DNA the ability to mutate and continually adapt to an evolving environment.

56 David Martin Jones, "*Deleuze and World Cinemas*", p. 65 (Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011).

57 Thomas Elsaesser, " 'Constructive Instability', or: *The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?*", in "*Video Vortex Reader*" edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

58 Gilles Deleuze, "*Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*", translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983).



Ambaradan, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video Ethiopia, Omo Valley, 2014

9. Towards a Theory of Turbo Montage:

*"I love editing. I think I like it more than any other phase of film making. If I wanted to be frivolous, I might say that everything that precedes editing is merely a way of producing film to edit."*⁵⁹

1.1 *Editing as Art and not Language*

In a general overview of filmmaking today, it is difficult to find a dominant paradigm of editing. Instead, we face a plurality of theories and methodologies. Montage, one of the very objects of cinema studies, dissolves in the larger discussion over globalized audiovisual web-based moving-image platforms that have substitute the classical sequences in what is been called "scroll montage."⁶⁰

To correctly frame the nature of these complex structures, one must include the historical discourse surrounding montage and the entire process of filmmaking, from preproduction to screening and distribution, and possibly in a nonlinear approach. Cinema, as conceptual art, from its earliest day has always survived by adapting in a competitive media environment. This morphing quality is part of its nature, and is the reason why Cinema is, let's be clear here, far from dying. To understand the moving-image culture of the present, and to understand its trajectories, we must keep in mind the history of cinema and art, for it is out of this buried past that we can fully imagine the potential futures. For this reason, one topic that I would like to remove from the discussion while referring to montage and editing is the discourse surrounding editing as a "language."

In film studies this is often a very common mistake and it has its roots in history. Cinema as a universal language became prominent in its early stages in the 1920s. Silent filmmakers especially considered films to constitute a kind of universal visual language. The aspiration of filmmakers like F.W. Murnau was to make films that could be shown anywhere in the world and yet be understood by people that

59 Stanley Kubrik , Director, a Visual Analysis, by Alexander Walker, p. 42 (W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1999).

60 "Scroll montage" is a form of multiple screen montage developed specifically for the moving image in the internet."See also chapter 16.2 "Surfing With Satoshi: Database film and new cinematic qualities of the poor image" see also Lev Manovich , "The Film as a Database" in "The Language of New Media" (MIT Press, Boston, 2001).

didn't share culture or language.⁶¹ These filmmakers understood that films could communicate pictorially by gesture, and because their films were silent there was no need to subtitle them. Even inter-titles were kept to a minimum. They were aiming to develop films as an international idiom.

From a simplistic point of view films can be seen as a language because of their ability to communicate a story and convey emotion. This works as a generic metaphor, but this parallel cannot be pushed to a point that would enable us to call any filmic structure a language.

For Gregory Currie,⁶² even though it is difficult to define the essence of "language," images do not communicate in the fashion of words, they instead are naturally generative of meanings. If cinematic language were in fact a language, Currie argues, this language would have to be "startlingly different" from any natural languages with which we are familiar.

For one thing, this "language" would use only one medium, sight, whereas natural languages like English can be seen, heard, and even touched. Film editing generally has rules that are followed in the construction of meaning, but these rules are to be considered as suggestions or even conventions, they are not grammatical in the strictest sense. As in poetry, where rules are there to be overturned, film editing has to be considered as an art form. In this sense the editing of Turbo Films is closer to the process of art making than film editing as intended in a traditional way.

9.1 *Montage is Everywhere*

⁶¹ *Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau, German film director, 1888 – 1931.*

⁶² *Gregory Currie, "The long goodbye: the imaginary language of Films" (British Journal Aesthetics, London, 1993).*

Often in film theory the term Montage is preferred to editing. this because montage has connotations that go beyond the mechanical process of editing. The term montage often refers to a creative act that starts at the beginning of a film and ends in the screening room with the contribution of the audience minds. Montage is everywhere.

“Montage it precedes the filming, in the choice of material, that is, the portions of matter which are to enter into interaction, sometimes very distant or far apart (life as it is). It enters into the filming, in the intervals occupied by the camera-eye (the cameraman who follows, runs, enters, exits: in short, life in the film). It comes after the filming, in the editing-room, where material and filming are evaluated against one another (the life of the film), and in the audience, who compare life in the film and life as it is.”⁶³

Deleuze does not consider montage to function in the service of narrative construction. Rather he believes that narrative is a product of montage. It can also be said that the taxonomy of images undoubtedly influences the question of whether the narrative function drives the construction of the ideologically conceived organic whole that is seen through the montage.

63 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, p.40 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983).



La Verifica Incerta, by Gianfranco Barruchello and Alberto Grifi, Prove di Montaggio (Editing Test). 1962 - 1964

9.2 From Spaghetti Western to YouTube Neorealism

For Martin Jones, especially in Spaghetti Western Films, characters do not act in a manner that influences the whole; rather, actions take place in situations that just “happen along.”⁶⁴ This “time-image” attitude is where the sensory motor of the movement image no longer governs the fate of the characters by the strength of narration and structure, a freedom that Deleuze discovers primarily in Italian neorealism. This freedom from an imposed, deterministic sensory motor, typical of the “time-image” observed by Deleuze in Italian neorealist films among others, shares with today’s practices of perceiving and representing “reality with reality,”⁶⁵ in what could be seen as Youtube-neorealism.⁶⁶ These two genres have different aesthetics but share similar trajectories.

Neorealism was an attempt to open up the space which had been territorialized by plot and by narrative. In opposition to the “death schemes” of closure premised upon action, neorealism offered a “*dispersive and lacunar reality... a series of fragmentary, chopped up encounters.*”⁶⁷ For Deleuze neorealism signified the beginning of a new era in Cinema, what he calls the cinema of the time-image.

From his point of view neo-realism cinema was not interesting solely because of its social and political content. It was the nature of its cinematic image that struck him. Thanks to his writings we can now experience these films under a new light:

“From the perspective implied by a philosophy of becoming, the political and social agendas of neorealist films are not evaluated according to either their reflection of given historical/social realities or retrospective judgments regarding the efficacy of their politics. Instead, the political and aesthetic import of the films is shown to be a direct consequence of their ability to restructure perception and to revitalize thought, even at the expense of traditional modes of cinematic enunciation.”⁶⁸

64 David Martin Jones, “*Deleuze and World Cinemas*” (Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2011).

65 Pier Paolo Pasolini, interview in “*A future Life*” p. 41 (Associazione fondo Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rome, 1989).

66 Massimiliano Gioni, in phone conversation with Paololuca Barbieri (New York, 2014).

67 Gilles Deleuze, “*Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*”, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1983).

68 Thomas Kelso, “*Italian dreams: Neorealism and Deleuze*” p. 28 (University of Pensilvania, 2004).

For example, Cesare Zavattini, among others, was firmly against tragedy and the figure of the hero in his films. Zavattini, a screenwriter who often collaborated with the Vittorio De Sica, was against the idea of building a story around reality through the convention of cinematic representation. He believed that making the audience face reality in a film without any baroque intrusion by its authors would awaken in them a sense of responsibility and dignity.

“The most important characteristic of neorealism, it’s essential innovation, is, for me, the discovery that [the] need to use a story was just an unconscious means of masking human defeat in the face of reality; imagination, in its own manner of functioning, merely superimposes death schemes onto living events and situations.”⁶⁹

“I am against exceptional persons, heroes. I have always felt an instinctive hatred towards them. I feel offended by their presence, excluded from their world as millions of others like me. We are all characters. Heroes create inferiority complexes throughout an audience. The time has come to tell each member of the audience that he is the true protagonist of life. The result would be a constant emphasis on the responsibility and dignity of every human being. This is exactly the ambition of neorealism: to strengthen everyone, and to give everyone a proper awareness of human beings.”⁷⁰

Zavattini’s point of view, if applied to new media, user-generated content and homemade videos of YouTube, opens up new interpretations of the role of the audience/user. Following this trajectory we could try to trace a history of influencers of today visual attitude towards moving images.

Neorealism introduced the idea that everyone is a character, his own hero, the protagonist of his own film. This attitude is taken for granted today, but actually permanently shifted our outlook towards filmmaking. Deleuze is right.

69 Robert C. Pirro, “*The politics of Tragedy and Democratic Citizenship*” p.67 (*The Continuum International Publishing group, New York, 2011*).

70 Cesare Zavattini, “*Some ideas on the Cinema*” recorded interview published in “*La rivista del cinema Italiano 2* (Rome, 1952).

9.3 *The World ‘Wild’ Web Cinema and Back to the Origins*

From spaghetti western we underlined the international nature, it's ability to travel over languages barriers thanks to basic structure made of sequences of spectacles and sensations, surrounded by an anarchic spirit.

Today digital films that are shared through the web are no more targeted on a specific area or cultural group, they no longer refer to a specific socio political system. They bypass censure and local taboos, each time adding new layers to their original form. In this chaotic system new genres of films are emerging, they have no land or country of origin. Their relation with time and space is in constant redefinition and in Deleuzian terms.

As the global rhizome of world wild web cinemas is understood in relation to its de-territorialized flows, at the same way Deleuze's ideas and western film theory in general must depart on their travels, becoming de-territorialized themselves whenever they encounter films in new contexts, emphasizing spectacle and sensation rather than narrative and action.

The complexities of today film production worldwide suggests that everything may not be as clear as it seemed in the 80s' to Deleuze, even if thanks to his taxonomies we can try to trace and visualize trajectories and trends before obscure to the eyes.

The rhizome of world 'wild' web cinema should be considered as a gradually spreading forest in which each tree contains its own roots and branches, but which should still be taken as an interconnected multiplicity (forest) of minor cinemas which are changing the industry and the way we relate to it.

Probably the question raised by minor cinema is how filmmakers attempt to construct a memory of the future for people yet to come. It looks like the history of moving images restarted from scratch few years ago, having each user/filmmaker re-experiencing the freedom and void of early cinema and re-questioning the whole apparatus of film making.

Deleuze suggested us that montage is not just what happens in the editing room but it starts from preproduction by selecting elements, props, locations and so on

and it ends in the viewer mind during the film screening. This is how we should still intend the film making process, again taking this attitude from the past. open narrative structures and montage rules that can be applied to today visual culture rhizome can be found, for example in the Russian school of Podvokin, Eisenstein and Vertov.

They believed that just have a script was considered a colonialist attitude in itself, because by forcing a situation to achieve the directors visual script, you force actors and people and you force yourself. This vertical system of relation kills all the powerful possibilities that are hidden in the film process itself and in the situation the directors encounters.

If we look back, even Eisenstein and colleagues were giving philosophical and artistic primary value to the montage process. He developed a particular theory of montage called the montage of attraction. On the pages of Moscow arts magazine *Lef* in 1923 he writes:

“Instead of a static ‘reflection’ of an event with all possibilities for activity within the limits of the event’s logical action, we advance to a new plane free montage of arbitrarily selected, independent (within the given composition and the subject links that hold the influencing actions together) attractions—all from the stand of establishing certain final thematic effects—this is montage of attractions. [...] The only true and solid base for the action of a production can be found in attractions and in a system of attractions. With all details gathered together in the hand of the director, the attraction is always, in some way, intuitive employed, but not on a plane of montage or construction, but as part of a harmonic composition, but this exists solely within the frame of the subject’s plausibility, chiefly unconsciously and in the pursuit of something entirely different (usually something that is present in the rehearsals from the beginning).”⁷¹

According to this theory, films have to be chaotic and discontinuous to provoke a reaction in the viewer soul. As in a variety show, the director needs to mix a variety of elements and suggestions. This has to be made to capture the attention of the spectator. Once we have his attention, Eisenstein thinks we can push him to intellectual reflections.

71 Sergei Eisenstein, “*Film Form and Film Sense: Essays in film theory*”, edited by Jay Leyda p. 232 (Meridian Books, New York, 1957).

His idea is to recreate the chaos of life by an apparent disorganized stream of attractions. This will stimulate the audience imagination and inspire.

Eisenstein first attempt to put in place his theory of montage of attraction is notable in his film *Strike!* a mix of revolutionary clips and chaotic scenes of workers struggle. In his article “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form” Eisenstein noted that montage is “the nerve of cinema”, and that “to determine the nature of montage is to solve the specific problem of cinema. This discourse is still valid in today visual culture.

For Eisenstein, montage was an idea ‘that arises from the collision of independent shots’ wherein “each sequential element is perceived not next to the other, but on top of the other”⁷².

Today we can find a parallelism with his theory by just scrolling a Tumblr page or any profile page with images produced by millions of social media users. We will find a vertical and chaotic juxtaposition in which just experienced semantic travelers can orientate and rearticulate.

The problem of meaning from the perspective of the Montage of Attraction is not inherent in the filmed scenes, subjects or objects but, as Geoffrey Newell Smith describe with accuracy in his book *Eisenstein*:

“Meaning is created by the collision of two signifying elements, one coming after (or together) with the other and, through the juxtaposition, defying the sense to be given to the whole. [...] The viewer, in assonance with Eisenstein montage of attraction, is then confronted with the problem of transforming its ‘illusory pictures’ and its ‘presentations’ into a montage of ‘real matters’ while at the same time weaving into the montage full ‘pieces of representation’ tied to the plot development of the subject, but now not as self-enforced and all-determining, but as consciously contributing to the whole production and selected for their pure strength as active attractions.”⁷³

72 Sergei Eisenstein, “*Montage of Attractions*” essay published in the journal *Lef* (Moscow, 1923) also at p.33 (BFI Publishing, Indiana University Press, London 1988).

73 Geoffrey Newell Smith, introduction to “*Selected Works*” by S. Eisenstein, edited by Richard Taylor p. XV-XVI (Proletkult, 1922).



Stillframe from The Man with the Movie Camera, directed by Dziga Vertov and edited by his wife Elizaveta Svilova, 1929

9.4 *Montage in Visual Culture: Database vs. Narrative*

Eisenstein's montage theory resonates in Turbo Film's structures.

This is evident through the lens of Manovich's theory on the montage nature of today's digital culture and new film structures. In 'The Language of New Media' he differentiates montage into two main categories, "temporal montage" and "montage within the shot." "Temporal montage" refers to a series of consecutive moments in time, while the "montage within a shot" is a multilayered image in the same frame. This second montage category is experienced in today's digital cinema as well as in the visual surfing experience online.

Manovich sees contemporary cinema as the "toolbox" for all cultural communication.⁷⁴ He believes that moving images may replace the written word as new technologies become more accessible.

The most relevant contribution of Manovich for this thesis is his comparative analysis of database and narrative. Written in 1998 before YouTube and most social media platforms, it still resonate as a starting point for any visual system that may emerge in the future.

"As a cultural form, database represents the world as a list of items and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies. Competing for the same territory of human culture, each claims an exclusive right to make meaning out of the world."⁷⁵

Manovich first defines the role of the interface in contemporary digital culture. He states that while previously artists had no need for an interface, by making unique works in one medium, today with new media, "the content of the work and the interface become separate. It is therefore possible to create different interfaces to the same material. These interfaces may present different versions of the same work."⁷⁶

74 Lev Manovich, *"The Language of New Media"* p. 92 (MIT Press, Boston, 2001).

75 Lev Manovich, *ibidem*, p. 8.

76 Lev Manovich, *ibidem*, p. 10.

It's like taking all the cuts from a film and having them ready to be combined with all other films and footage, suggesting endless possibilities. The film, at this point, can be seen as an organized database that can respond to different contexts and environments.

The fact that there are multiple possibilities and that digital media forced a change in the definition of narrative "does not mean that any arbitrary sequence of database records is a narrative."

What has really happened is that the term "narrative" must now take on expanded meaning because we don't know how to relate to these new and strange media objects that are populating the digital realm.

What could look like a narrative stream or an organized sequence of images is actually most of the time what the artist Seth Price defined as "visual hoardings" in his published paper *Teen Image*:

"What can we say about the experience of scrolling through a [visual] hoarding, trying to understand the procession of pictures? As in traditional fashion magazines, we find excitement and confusion in equal measure, with one catalyzing the other. Beyond that, it often seems that any information or knowledge in these pages is glimpsed only through a slight fog of uncertainty. Has an image been spirited out of the military defense community, or is it journalism; is it medical imaging, or pornography; an optical-illusion, or a graph; is it hilarious, disturbing, boring; is it doctored, tweaked, hue-saturated, multiplied, divided; is it a ghost or a vampire? In any event, the ultimate effect is: "What the fuck am I looking at?". Something that hovers in your peripheral vision"⁷⁷

To take on a narrative structure, the semantics of each element that compose the piece and the logic of their connections need to be somehow controlled by the author. For Manovich, every digital media object whether it presents itself as a linear narrative structure or a discontinuous one, or as simply a list of layers, from the perspective of material organization is always a database.

77 Seth Price, "*Teen Image*", last accessed September 2015, <http://www.distributed-history.com/teenymage.html>, p. 4 (Distributed History, New York, 2009).

He goes even one step forward by asserting that “the dynamics that exist between database and narrative are not unique in new media. The relation between the structure of a digital image and the languages of contemporary visual culture is characterized by the same dynamics.”⁷⁸

“What would a typical image look like if the layers were merged together? The elements contained on different layers will become juxtaposed resulting in a montage look. Montage is the default visual language of composite organization of an image.”⁷⁹

This multilayered nature of the digital image creates an “in-depth dimension,” a verticality that is similar to what Eisenstein was referring to as Vertical Montage.

In a famous example, he compares the filmic structure to the music, where each image is to be seen as an instrument which develops in a horizontal movement while the most important for the audience is the vertical movement, the sum of all interactions between instruments.

He envisions a polyphonic film, in which the simultaneous movement of a number of motifs advances through a succession of sequences, each motif with its own rate of compositional progression, while at the same time inseparable from the overall compositional progression as a whole.⁸⁰

This way of thinking about film inspired the masterpieces of early Russian cinema. The primordial root of Database Cinema is the short film, *The Man with the Movie Camera* by Dziga Vertov.

The film is famous for many reasons, one of which is Vertov’s brilliance in exploring the verticality or depth dimension of compositing and multi-layering moving images.

78 Lev Manovich, “Database as Symbolic Form” in *The Language of New Media*, p. 12 (MIT Press, Boston, 2001).

79 . Lev Manovich, *ibidem*..

80 See Sergei Eisenstein, “Vertical montage” essay in *The Film Sense* edited and translated by Jay Leyda p.74-75 (Meridian Books, New York, 1957.



La Verifica Incerta, by Gianfranco Barruchello and Alberto Grifi, 1962 - 1964
Artist's Serial Killer by Alterazioni Video, 2007
 Two examples of database montage applied to found footage.

9.5 ‘Turbo’ Vertov

For Manovich, Dziga Vertov is a Database filmmaker. His film *The Man with the Movie Camera* is considered the grass roots of contemporary moving image database discourses.

In the film itself, the viewer is witness to the editing process as it is happening. We actually see the wife of Vertov, Elizaveta Svilova, editing the film, receiving daily new footage and organizing it in the kitchen. This “meta scene” functions as a metaphor to understand the nature of the complex film structure itself. The subject of the film was intended to be on one level the story of the filmmaker’s struggle “to reveal social structures from the observation of a multitude of phenomena. Its project is a brave attempt at an empirical epistemology that only has one tool: perception. The goal is to decode the world purely through the surfaces visible to the eye.”⁸¹

In this cinematic scenario, where the yin and the yang forces of filmmaking are balanced in a non-linear discontinuous system of attraction and spectacle, we discover the hidden order of the world, the patterns behind human society and culture.

“In Vertov works the database shows its more powerful potentialities as a open narrative structure. Instead of following a script and using images just to make the text resonate visually, he uses the database to construct an argument creating a picture of modern life but simultaneously an argument about this life, an interpretation of what these images, which we encounter every day, every second, actually mean.”⁸²

Vertov was convinced that his concept of the “kino-eye,”⁸³ which was used to describe the sum of all the techniques to manipulate images, could become a great tool to decode the world, as if the crack of all codes was in that verticality that images offer us every day.

81 Lev Manovich, “*Database as symbolic form*” in “*Database Aesthetics*”, editor Victoria Vesna, p. 56 (University of Minnesota press,, Minneapolis, 2007).

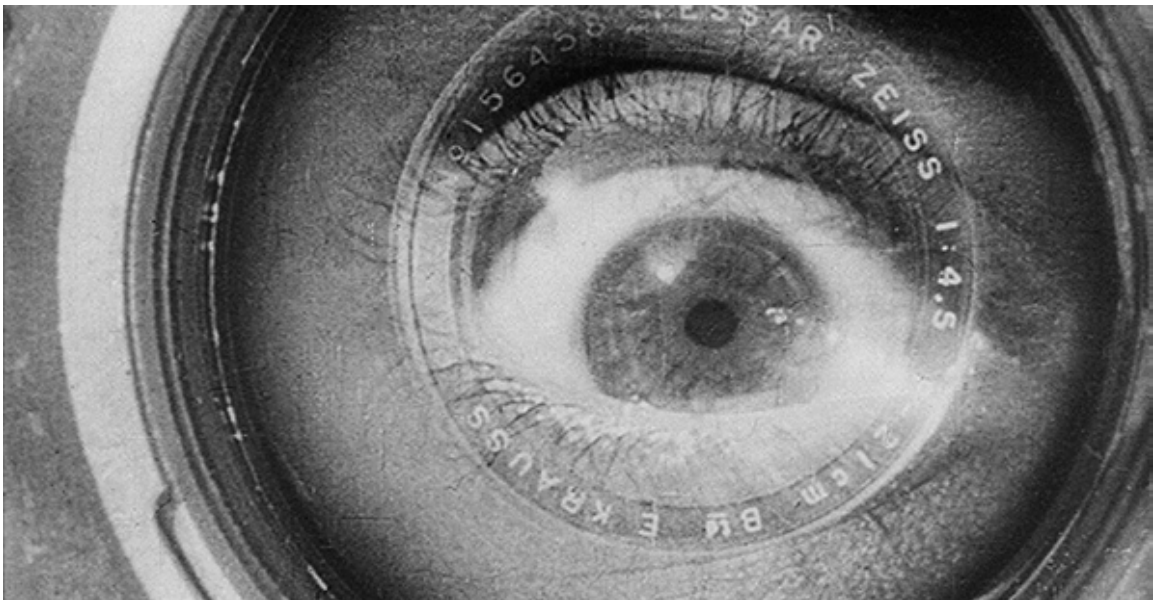
82 Lev Manovich, “*Database as symbolic form*” in “*Database Aesthetics*”, editor Victoria Vesna, p. 60 (University of Minnesota press,, Minneapolis, 2007).

83 Dziga Vertov, “*Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*”, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O’Brien (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984).

Vertov filmmaking led to the perception of narrative and database as merging into a new form of memory stream, a formula that, as Manovich notes, was not possible without him.

“I am kino-eye. I am a builder. I have placed you ,whom I’ve created today, in a extraordinary room which did not exist until just now when I also created it. In this room there are twelve walls shot by e in various parts of the world. In bringing together shots of walls and details I’ve managed to arrange them in an order that is pleasing and to construct with intervals, correctly, a film-phrase which is the room. [...] I am kino-eye. From one person I take the hands, the strongest and most dexterous; from another I take the legs the swiftest and most shapely; from a third the most beautiful and expressive head - and through montage I create a new perfect man.

I am kino-eye, I am a mechanical eye. I’, a machine, show you the world as only I can see it.”⁸⁴



Stillframe from The Man with the Movie Camera, directed by Dziga Vertov and edited by his wife Elizaveta Svilova, 1929

84 Dziga Vertov, “Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov”, ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O’Brien p. 17 (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984).

9.6 Cinema after Cinema

We could draw a trajectory in time that goes from Vertov's visionary approach all the way through avant-garde performative films, experimental cinema, conceptual video art, expanded cinema, fun fiction films, mokumentaries, up to today's post cinematic "organic" visual realm. During this trajectory the distance between high art, "operational images,"⁸⁵ pop culture, commercial videos or conceptual art, has collapsed in favor of a stream of passional encounters.

Elsaesser, while trying to imagine a future for Cinema, focused on a post-epistemological idea of cinema, living through cinema as a particular way of being-in-the-world, and participating in its disclosure, its unfolding, its becoming present. He envisioned a more ontological view of the cinematic experience following a line drawn by Deleuze and Ranciere.

He tries to understand under what circumstances or conditions (cultural historical, technological-industrial or aesthetic-formal) is it conceivable that the moving image no longer requires as its main medium the particular form of time/space/agency we know as narrative as defined by Deleuze.⁸⁶

Manovich, with a more pragmatic attitude and coming from new media studies, sees cinema as an important reference or set of rules in contemporary new media culture. Following his discourse on database and interfaces, he defines Cinema as a cultural interface:

85 *In other words, by going back to early and pre-cinema, and duly noting the non-entertainment uses of the cinematic apparatus, one can advance the proposition that "the cinema has many histories, only some of which belong to the movies."* Harun Farocki, *Working on the Sight-Lines*, edited by Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2004). And again: "Harun Farocki was one of the first to notice that image-making machines and algorithms were poised to inaugurate a new visual regime. Instead of simply representing things in the world, the machines and their images were starting to "do" things in the world. In fields from marketing to warfare, human eyes were becoming anachronistic. It was, as Farocki would famously call it, the advent of "operational images.", from Trevor Paglen article "Operational Images", e-flux magazine, last time accessed Sptemeber 2015, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/operational-images/>, (e-flux.com, New York, 2014).

86 Thomas Elsaesser, "Discipline through Diegesis: The Rube Film Between Attraction and Narrative integration, in *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p.216 (Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 1999).

“Despite frequent pronouncements that cinema is dead, it is actually on its own way to becoming a general purpose cultural interface, a set of techniques and tools which can be used to interact with any cultural data.”⁸⁷

Elsaesser cites Manovich, agreeing with him that we need to generate a new set of epistemological and ontological parameters and priorities to understand where cinema is going and how it can empower contemporary media objects.”

On one side, with new media, we have the ongoing database, a multifaceted and multilayered organism that in some cases is self- propagating, generating non-linear and non-continuous narrative, similar to what Eisenstein called “polyphonic film,” a system that recalls the possibility of post-human films generated by intelligent database machines.

On the other side, with cinema and art, we have the encounter, determined by temporal, spatial aesthetic, and formal parameters. The encounter is an event that implies presence in space and time, through both the performers and the viewers. an experience that is triggered by the film but that doesn’t end with it. Cinema is not solely a set of tools and rules.⁸⁸

A deregulated approach to cinema that investigates the particular impurities of cinema itself, and that drives it beyond the specificities of the medium and into the realm of the other arts and the reality of life itself, becomes, in my opinion, a form of political resistance, it becomes a form of transformative politics.

For the French philosopher François Lyotard, in within the film practice, film direction is not an artistic activity but “a general process touching on all fields of activity”⁸⁹ and, moreover, political activity is “direction par excellence”.

87 Lev Manovich, “*Cinema as a Cultural Interfaces*” p.5 (Manovich.net, 1997, last time accessed April 7 2016).

88 Thomas Elsaesser, “ ‘*Constructive Instability*’, or: *The Life of Things as the Cinema’s Afterlife?*”, in “*Video Vortex Reader*” edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

89 Felicity Colman, “*Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers*”, p 225 Routledge, Dec 5 2014

While politics and cinema are similar because of their ability of being ordering activities that attempt to create unities out of partial components, Lyotard is less interested in the effect of the ordering and more concerned about the processes of elimination, effacement and exclusion on which it depends. His focus is on what is left over, what is cut out, what is not shown to the public. Under this perspective, Lyotard compares the politician with the film director.

“The central problem for both (the film and the political body) is not the representational arrangement and its accompanying question, that of knowing how and what to represent and the definition of good or true representation; the fundamental problem is the exclusion and foreclosure of all that is judged unrepresentable because non recurrent”⁹⁰

Lyotard focuses on dirty, confused, unsteady, unclear, poorly framed or overexposed moments in cinema anticipating the qualities of the digital environment in which, soon after, it would proliferate the poor image. His approach to Cinema advocates a cinema that does not depend on unity and balance but in a constant movement of rupture.

It's in this rupture and constant fragmentation that we discover the true nature of Turbo Film.

⁹⁰ J F Lyotard, “Acinema”, p 57, translated by Paisley N. Livingston, *Added Attraction*, Wide Angle, Vol 2, 1978



Still frame from deleted scene from Fred, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video, Berlin, 2012

10. Conclusions of the First Section

In this first section I tried to underline a number of key frameworks in conceptual art, film theory, and new media studies that could help us set the bases for imagining possible futures. We analyzed how today's situation is favorable for the emergence of new cinematic media objects. Moving images can be generated through a collective and shared ongoing process that contract and expand like a breathing organism, producing cyclic encounters between media objects that happen in vertical time, a time of memory and duration where everything can be remixed and reshaped through a kind of 'sexual' drive, with the goal "to decode the world purely through the surfaces visible to the eye."⁹¹

We described how past, present, and future cinematic experiences are remixed in multilayered visual codes (formats), a number of condensed images being passed over like the colorful patterns of the orgiastic encounters between Flusserian infernal squids. The offspring of these encounters are new media objects, new audiovisual bodies. Most of which are unidentified and mysterious. Their habitat is an "uncanny valley,"⁹² a place where things look repulsively strange and attractively familiar at the same time.

The Wu Ming, an Italian collective of anonymous writers, while trying to define new narrative objects in literature, wrote:

"We are talking about a new type of relationship with reality that is mediated by a new language. It is no tone of mere fantasy, but rather refers to facts; it's a documentary literature, a non-fiction novel if you will. [...] Today, directors (if that term still makes sense), artists and authors use anything they think is right and serious to use.

91 Lev Manovich, "Database as a Symbolic Form", in 'Database Aesthetic' edited by Victoria Vesna, p. 56 (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2007).

92 "Uncanny valley" is a phrase coined by Japanese engineer Mori Masahiro in 1970. Mori's hypothesis is that when a robot looks and acts almost like a human being, this will cause a response of horror and rejection among humans. According to Mori, it's a case of the night being darker just before dawn, because as soon as the robot will look and act exactly like a human being, reactions among humans will be positive. He calls this period of revulsion "the uncanny valley", because it's a dip in a graph. Now, forget about robots. I think this is a useful metaphor to describe the way an unidentified narrative object is perceived by attentive readers."from: Wu Ming, "New Italian Epic: We're going to have to be the parents", opening talk to the conference "The Italian Perspective on Metahistorical Fiction: The New Italian Epic" (Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London, UK, 2008).

Right and serious. The two adjectives are entirely appropriate. The works of the new cloud are not lacking in humor, but reject the detachment and cold irony of the postmodernist pastiche. In these cinematic audiovisual artifacts and in these new media art works there is a warmth, positions are taken and responsibilities assumed that go beyond the compulsive complicity and postmodern insistence on not taking oneself (and the world) too seriously.”⁹³

The Wu Ming are looking for an ethical approach to (visual) storytelling, they see an opportunity for imagining an epic future, after years of audiovisual bulimia and postmodern superficiality. Their attitude towards storytelling is a strong reference in my research for the formulation of my cinematic apparatus.

In the attempt to understand the new cinematic trajectories that are emerging from the pictorial turn and the post-human horizon, we analyzed the writings of Lev Manovich and Mitchell, and the ecosystem in which new media objects are generated and distributed; an environment that seems to give life to images without the need of human interference.

We started our analysis from the art context, where we find few examples on how conceptual artists were able to translate philosophical concepts and ideas in artworks dealing with new media technologies and anticipating an attitude towards the camera and the audience that sounded like a premonition for our current relation to online media.⁹⁴ We outlined the concepts of time as duration and Deleuze’s taxonomy, the Time Image and Italian neorealism, and Zavattini’s strong statement, “the time has come to tell each member of the audience that he is the true protagonist of life.”

We focused on the attraction-image defined by Martin Jones relating to early cinema and more recent film genres like Spaghetti Westerns and Neorealism. From Deleuze we also borrowed the definition of ‘intensities’ where he explains how philosophic concepts turn into sound and images, existing through cinema.⁹⁵

⁹³ Wu Ming, “NEW ITALIAN EPIC” versione 2.0, Memorandum 1993-2008: *narrativa, sguardo obliquo, ritorno al futuro*, edited by Wu Ming 1, at <http://carmillaonline.com/archives/2008/09/002775.html> [accessed 5 February 2014].

⁹⁴ Alexander Alberro, “Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity”, (The MIT Press, Boston, 2003).

⁹⁵ Gilles Deleuze, “Difference and repetition”, translated by Paul R. Patton (Columbia University Press, New York, 1994).

Early Russian cinema gave us the basis of montage, precisely the montage of attraction, showing us how these films still resonate in current landscape of moving images with the ability to be transnational and meaningful worldwide. We highlighted Vertov's masterpiece "*The Man with Movie Camera*" and his theory on the Kino-Eye, borrowing from his (and his wife's) attitude in the editing room. We have been inspired by Manovich theory of Database films, where cinema is intended as a cultural interface, a place where ontological experiences can happen.

Looking for new avant-garde attitudes, we recalled Thomas Elsaesser's theory on "performed failures" and the possibility of an avant-garde as a "hive mind" on today's online sharing platforms.⁹⁶

How we can string together these concepts, and how we can synthesize them in a cinematic form and a sharable and useful apparatus is the subject of the second and third part of this research.

Ian Cheng, a young, well-known artist and filmmaker, was asked in an interview in Frieze magazine⁹⁷ to imagine the future of moving images.

His answer is the bridge I have chosen for the next section:

"Imagine a narrative format that has probabilistic outcomes. Imagine a narrative format that can simulate unscripted contingencies against scripted choreography. Imagine a narrative format that requires its authors to embrace contingency and irreversible change during its making. Imagine a narrative format that doesn't promise a scheduled time to end. Imagine a narrative format that erodes as you erode."⁹⁸

96 Thomas Elsaesser, "'Constructive Instability', or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's After-life?" Video Vortex reader: responses to YouTube by G. Lovink & S. Niedere, p.18 (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, 2008).

97 Ian Cheng, "*Future Fictions*", last accessed on September 2015, http://www.frieze.com/issue/print_article/future-fictions/, (Freeze Magazine, London, 2013).

98 Ian Cheng, *ibidem*.

11. Introduction to Section 2

1.1 *New: A Playful Recombination of Good Ideas and Technologies*

The goal of this section is to define a particular praxis and a specific set of guidelines that can empower the possibility of new cinematic creative processes. When speaking about the “new” in art and cinema we must be cautious that it is not an eternal return in disguise. Using Elsaesser words:

“we have to be careful not to be just following everything that comes up on our horizon, just because it’s new. To relate to what is new we need to keep under consideration History and tradition. Just because the new comes up from something doesn’t mean it’s ruptured from something. But let’s be careful about the new as a value. That’s the danger of the new. It can actually be the old in a different guise.”⁹⁹

I think Elsaesser is right in the sense that for new media, art, cinema, or philosophy nothing can be created or said that is not a remix, resonating what preceded it. When speaking of the “new” we should refer to the Deleuzian concept of variation in repetition.¹⁰⁰ In this, there are new ways to recombine, to reshape, destroy, and rebuild in an ongoing flux connected to the whole.

“What can be seen as new is nothing else than the intertwining between the operations of art, the modes of circulation of imagery and the critical discourse that refers the operations of the one and the forms of the other to their hidden truth.”¹⁰¹

In this intertwining, while developing processes of remediation, technological transfers or translations from one media to another, we remap the past experiences in new configurations.

99 Thomas Elsaesser, “The Politics and Poetics of Obsolescence: Brunch With Thomas Elsaesser,” by Michael Guillen, interview, 2011, <https://mubi.com/notebook/posts/the-politics-and-poetics-of-obsolescence-brunch-with-thomas-elsaesser> (last time accessed 10 April 2016).

100 Gilles Deleuze, “Difference and repetition”, translated by Paul R. Patton (Columbia University Press, New York, 1994).

101 Jacques Rancière, “*The Future of the Image*” translated by Gregory Elliott, p. 17- 18 (Verso, London, 2009).

What can be seen as the “new” is what is changed in the environment around these fields of study, like technologies, attitudes (towards the visual), economies (around production), speed of bodies in space, and of data circulation in the digital realm, but also power structures (in terms of control and distribution), hierarchies and politics. Is what I defined ‘Always Already New’.

Further, the term “new” in this context should not refer to scientific objectivity but to the drive of artists and filmmakers to explore ongoing trajectories with irrational playfulness, and subjectivity.

The artist should develop integrative formats and technologies to be ready for the future (for the always already new).

My focus is on how to define and activate new lines of attraction in moving image production, by formulating new ethical and aesthetic paradigms within the expanding borders of visual culture.

11.1 A Powerful and Controversial Weapon: Irony

In Turbo Films, irony and humor are a recurrent element, but, as in the Wu Ming New Italian Epic, not in sense of a postmodern cynicism (don’t keep it cool and dry). Irony is often accused of being frivolous and superficial, often because of the compulsive complicity of user generating the content. When speaking of irony, we must reject the detachment of postmodern pastiche. In some recent production we can trace an awareness towards content, “where positions are taken and responsibilities assumed beyond the compulsive complicity of not taking oneself too seriously”.¹⁰²

We need to understand irony as propulsion for speed in the circulation of contents. We are aware of how popular culture and user-generated content have irony as one of their main attractors. Understanding the powerful qualities of irony is key to understanding visual culture.

¹⁰² Wu Ming, “NEW ITALIAN EPIC versione 2.0, Memorandum 1993-2008: narrativa, sguardo obliquo, ritorno al futuro”, edited by Wu Ming 1, at <http://carmillaonline.com/archives/2008/09/002775.html> [accessed 5 February 2014].

Wu Ming, while in search for new influencers, proposed the seven pillars, a thesis based on strong ethical standpoints, by which it is possible to regroup a number of literary work under the name 'New Italian Epic'. As noted by Dr. Francesco Monico, their retroactive manifesto can be applied not just to literature but as well to any kind of media object¹⁰³.

This the Memorandum:

- “1. Ethical commitment to writing and storytelling, which means: a deep trust in the healing power of language and stories.
2. A sense of political necessity -- and you can choose between the broader and the stricter sense of the adjective “political”.
3. The choice of stories that have a complex allegorical value. The initial choice may not even be intentional: the author may feel compelled to tell the story and later on understand what he was trying to say.
4. An explicit preoccupation for the loss of the future, with a propensity to use alternative history and alternative realities to force our gaze into imagining the future.
5. A subtle subversion of registers and language. “Subtle” because what’s important is not language experimentation in and of itself; what’s important is telling your story in what you feel is the best possible way.
6. A way of blending fiction and non-fiction that’s different from the ones we’ve gotten used to (e.g. Hunter S. Thompson’s “gonzo journalism”), a manner that I dare describe as “distinctly Italian”, which produces “unidentified narrative objects”.
7. Last but certainly not least, a “communitarian” use of the Internet to - as Genna himself put it - “share a hug with the reader.”

Today, directors (if that term still makes sense), artists and authors use anything they think is right and serious to use. Right and serious. The two adjectives are entirely appropriate.’¹⁰⁴

103 Francesco Monico, “Beyond Darwin: The co-evolutionary path of art, technology and consciousness. *What one could and should say: From Unidentified Narrative Objects to New Italian (Media) Epic*” presented at La Sala Parpalló, (Valencia, 2009).

104 Wu Ming, “*NEW ITALIAN EPIC versione 2.0, Memorandum 1993-2008: narrati- va, sguardo obliquo, ritorno al futuro*”, edited by Wu Ming 1, at <http://carmillaonline.com/archives/2008/09/002775.html> [accessed 5 February 2014].

To overthrow postmodernism's complicity with banality, Wu Ming established a number of conditions that promote an ethical commitment in storytelling, reintroducing a sense of political necessity to imagine an epic future. In this sense, irony becomes a form of resistance.

While humor is the art of thinking about the noises, sensations and sensible singularities from which bodies are composed, irony 'is the art of depths and heights.¹⁰⁵ Irony becomes a tool to prompt and destroy our preconceptions:

"The first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears as an art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles.

The second is humor, which is an art of consequences and descents, of suspensions and falls."¹⁰⁶

"Instead of the enormous opposition between the one and the many, there is only the variety of multiplicity -in other words, difference. It is perhaps ironic to say that everything is multiplicity, even the one, even the many. However, irony itself is a multiplicity - or rather, the art of multiplicities: the art of grasping the Ideas and problems they incarnate in things, and of grasping things as incarnations, as cases of solution for the problems of Ideas."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *"Difference and repetition"*, translated by Paul R. Patton (Columbia University Press, New York, 1994), see also Claire Colebrook, *"Irony: The new critical idiom"* (Routledge, London, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ Deleuze, *ibidem*.

¹⁰⁷ Deleuze, *ibidem*.

11.2 Expanded Journalism, process and platform: rethinking the political in the age of techno sphere

To understand the main implications and of the Wu Ming approach to literature once applied to filmmaking, we should have in mind Deleuze and Guattari definition of rhizome, and try to imagine their discoveries applied to a filmic structure:

A first type of book is the root-book. The tree is already the image of the world, or the root the image of the world-tree. This is the classical book, as noble, signifying, and subjective organic interiority (the strata of the book). The book imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do. The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes two. Nature doesn't work that way: in nature, roots are taproots with a more multiple, lateral, and circular system of ramification, rather than a dichotomous one. []

The radicle-system, or fascicular root, is the second figure of the book, to which our modernity pays willing allegiance. This time, the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible.

While reflecting on the structure of the rhizome, the French philosophers focus their attentions on works that are fragmented and non-linear, where any point can be connected to anything other (like Burroughs chaotic writing), a system that can take any form or disguise, "where the best and the worst coexist".

In an over informed and saturated environment of linear and dichotomous narratives as it may appear the main stream production of moving images, chaotic, fragmented, contradictory, paradoxical intensities are flourishing in unexpected directions. Turbo Films are just one the possible outcomes that this approach to storytelling is generating worldwide. I intend Turbo Films as part of a wider family of works made worldwide where investigative journalism meets creative activism and artistic displacement tactics. I call this attitude towards stories expanded journalism.

108 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "A Thousand Plateau", University of Minnesota Press, 1987

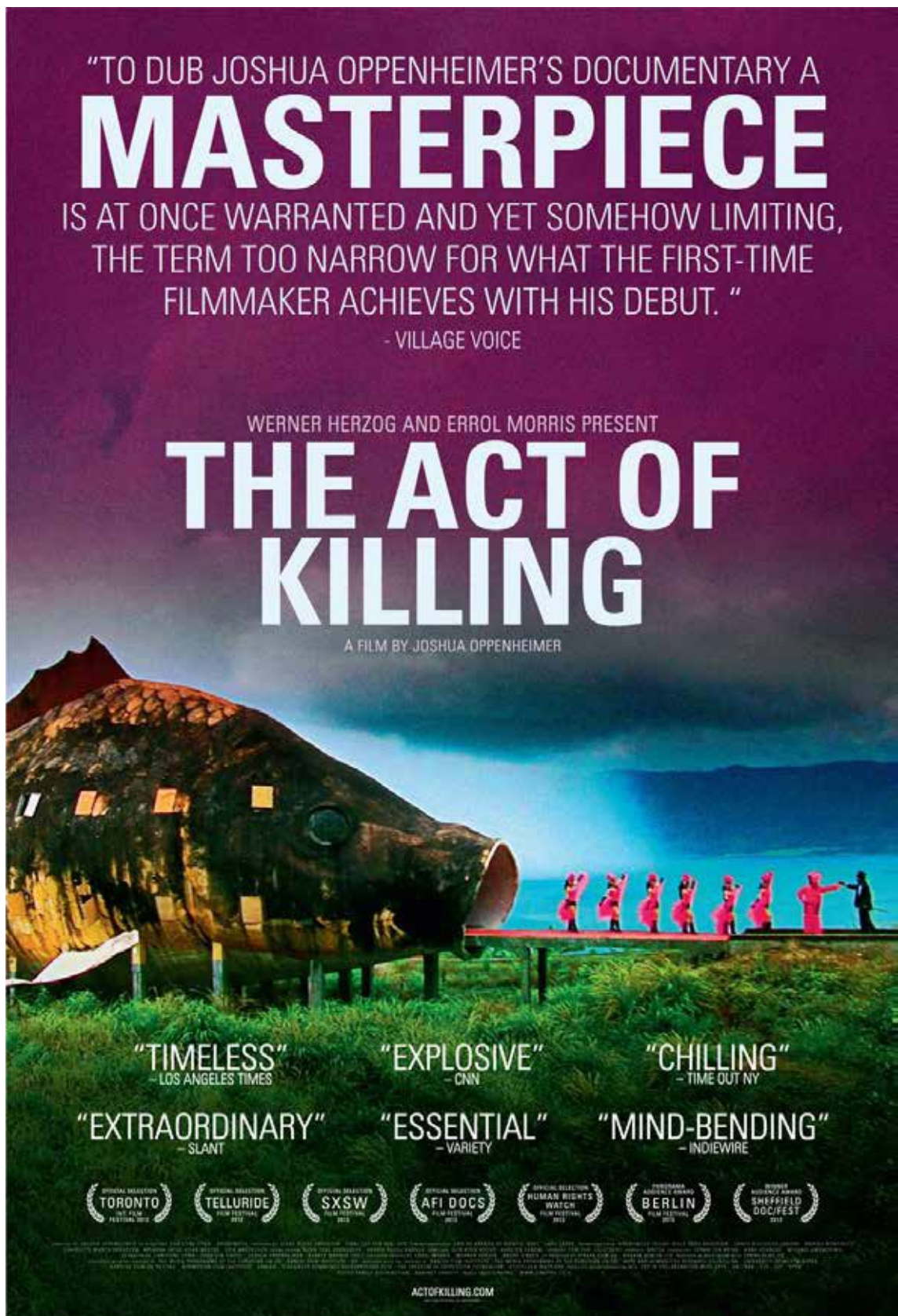
Thanks to this coexistence of serious investigations and out of the box creative thinking, expanded journalism reveals hidden layers of the chosen stories otherwise not visible to the camera eye.

Expanded Journalism by being a participative open process often inspires the communities involved in the story, generating unexpected outcomes.

One great example that gained worldwide success and that became a reference point for this form of “hands on” visual journalism is the Act of Killing directed by Joshua Oppenheimer. In his “expanded documentary” the focus of the storyline is the torture and murder of more than a million alleged Communists, in the mid 1960s. The film undertakes the re-enactment of these atrocities, utilizing unrepentant perpetrators, including gangsters and members of Indonesia’s pro-regime paramilitary. These former perpetrators, fashion themselves after the image of their favorite Hollywood heroes and genres in order to represent their crimes. Through this reenactment process we as spectator are driven in a hallucinatory reality that is the one of the killers mind. Moved by the aim of unveiling a horrific past, The Act of Killing becomes a cinematic experience that changes the reality we experience as spectators by expanding it with a creative approach that unveils the psychological consequences of such a horror.

The strength of the expanded journalism approach relies also on the possibility to find new unconventional angles on exploited stories, using creative means to drive attention to urgent issues and by doing so reshaping public opinion.

Expanded Journalism by taking a roller coaster stance that employs artistic and anthropologic probing methods adding a strong allegorical value to the investigation would not only inform its public, but inspiring it by employing strategies and tools from cinema, art, video-reportage, activism, advertising and music web-culture.



Poster of *The Act of Killing* directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, co-Directed by Anonymous & Christine Cynn

SECTION 2

12 What is a Turbo Film

“Um, what’s that? Is it a cartoon? No, it’s a documentary! Wait a second, ... it’s a movie!”¹⁰⁸

Turbo Film can be seen as a filmic system, a methodology that aims to raise social and political questions, through a transversal multi-format production that can circulate through different media platforms.

Turbo films have their grass roots in fine art. They have been using art spaces as an amplifier, a place where new ideas can take form and begin circulating while still incomplete.

Turbo films follow a history of ‘vandalized cinemas’¹⁰⁹ in contemporary art, experimental filmmaking, and online user-generated videos.

It is in the history of video art and experimental cinema that we can trace the constitutive elements of Turbo Films.

From the situationist’s ‘participatory cinema,’ where “those that want to construct this new world must simultaneously fight the tendency of cinema to constitute the anti-construction of situations, while recognizing the significance of the new technological developments which are valuable in and of themselves,”¹¹⁰ to Andy Warhol’s homemade performative films.

From Vito Acconci’s intimate videos to Glenn O’Brien’s TV Party project, from Harun Farocki use of found footage and video games platforms as Cinematic sets,¹¹¹ to Hito Steyerl philosophical videos and texts.

108 John Kelsey, “*Pedestrian Cinema*” from “*Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art*” ,p. 115 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

109 John Kelsey, “*Pedestrian Cinema*” from “*Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art*” ,p. 115 -121 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

110 Guy Debord, “Avec et contre le cinema” Internationale Situationniste N.1, found in <http://debordiana.chez.com/francais/is1.htm>, last time accessed September 2015 (Paris, 1958).

111 Harun Farocki, “*Parallel I-IV, 2012-14*”, four parts video installation, Greene Naf- tali Gallery, New York, 2014.

In today's rhizomatic and interconnected visual culture, the terms "avant-garde" and "experimental" have lost their grasp on the discourse surrounding cultural production. We could say that the avant-gardists looked in the right direction and achieved their goals. That's it for them.¹¹² The avant-gardists won their historical battles while signing their own death sentence. There is no need to fight for the same battles anymore.

Art, pop-culture, advertising, cinema, TV, and music are constantly being integrated in the endless productions that millions of users are generating.

Thomas Elsaesser, while trying to understand what remains of the avant-garde attitude, asks himself if the "hive mind" and the swarm phenomenon of YouTube could be perceived, from a semantic perspective, as an avant-garde in the historical sense.¹¹³

Art, intended as a system for the circulation and promotion of experimental cultural content, with its economy and network of spaces, publications, and events, became the perfect training ground for Turbo Films, as a sphere in which mistakes are accepted, exploited, and valorized.

The art world fostered the growth of Turbo Films by paying for their production and helping their circulation. The media hype around the art world empowered the process of Turbo Film production, by covering backstories in international mainstream media such as NYT, Vice, Le Monde, La Repubblica, Flash Art, Arforum among others.

On occasion, Turbo Films were presented as parts of immersive art installations in galleries and museum spaces. Their ability to adapt to and reshape within to new contexts brought about a series of artworks that used the film sets as source material.¹¹⁴

112 *The fight by the Situationists in favor of participative spectacle (in the production of films) and the use of cinema as a form of propaganda, as well as the conceptualist mission of merging art practices into everyday life in order to develop new aesthetics are been fulfilled by history and technology.*

113 Thomas Elsaesser, "Constructive Instability" or: *The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?*, in "Video Vortex Reader" edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer p.18 (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

114 These works have been shown together with the films and separately. Turbo Installation are been seen in Fondazione Re Rebaudengo, Turin, Kadist Foundation, Paris, Ramiken Crucible Gallery New York, among others.

In the case of *Per Troppo Amore*, the Turbo Film became a promotional campaign for the architectural project *Incompiuto Siciliano*. Several unique exhibitions and installations followed the screening of the film.

A Turbo Film aims to depict a problem of images, “reaching a cinematic equivalent of a burning bank, a looted supermarket, or a street riot;”¹¹⁵ a provisional, autonomous zone, an interference between art and cinema.

Turbo Films increase cinematic possibilities because of their liquid and unstable nature towards digital artifacts and their ability to mutate like parasites. Turbo films are an ongoing creative process, a different way to speak about politics and drama, a precise mix of differing visual languages.

This specific category of cinematic products comes as a reflection on the future of moving images. Because of its multiple nature, Turbo Films cannot be wholly absorbed into the fine art system or mainstream cinema. They are too abstract and frayed for the contemporary landscape of festivals and traditional distribution channels, and by television due to their disregard of preproduction plans and limitations of format.

The term Turbo has little to do with speed or exaggeration. If the films share an attitude towards sensation and spectacle similar to the one of exploitation films and other B-movie genres, it is because they provoke basic instincts and stereotypes to start a conversation, to grab the attention of the audience. You can't start a conversation at a bar with a long and boring introduction. You have to get to the point, fast.

Turbo Films stand between definitions. They stand somewhere in between Spaghetti Westerns and those unidentified narrative objects that could be referred to as YouTube Neorealism¹¹⁶.

115 J. Kelsey, “Pedestrian Cinema” found in *“Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art”* p.117 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

116 If we consider the last five years of video production and distribution through Youtube and similar online platform, thanks as well to the formats that the system implies and to the enormous exponential growth that it had, we can very much notice the similarities of some thousands of homemade ‘wondering about’ videos very similar to how Neorealist characters experience of the ‘milieu’ of the Italian postwar cinema.



Backstage photo on the set of Ambaradan, Omo Valley Ethiopia, 2014

Turbo Films are neither movement-images nor time-images. Their mash-up structure includes glimpses of duration as well as linear-time movement. With their fractured and unstable structure they could belong to a new category of image similar to the non-continuous attraction image.

Turbo Films are difficult to contain to a definitive collectable format, a new economy must be developed behind them.

Turbo Films don't betray their digital nature, by constantly developing their potential through new formulations and remixes.

They can be seen as "failed art projects." Art mistakes that went too far, or too pop, or too musical to reign in the world of aesthetic sublimation and the contemplation of the mainstream culture.

From a cinematic perspective, they appear to be abandoned, unfinished works. They exist as prototypes, floating in an eternal experimental stage.

Their beauty is to be seen in their instability and in their constant inevitable failure. Early cinema is a great reference to understand the DNA of Turbo Films. Early cinema theorist and filmmakers like Eisenstein, Vertov, and Méliès are of great importance to understand the contemporary attitude towards moving images and in particular some features specific to Turbo Films, such as image manipulation techniques and outcomes. Early cinema and Turbo Films take a laid back attitude towards the screening, considering it part of the creative process. The way films were screened and received by the audience at the beginning of the twentieth century is an inspiration for Turbo screening events.

John Kelsey describes those early cinema screenings as follows: "Those years, before even Cinemas where built with blocked chairs and hidden projector, films were screened in bars and public spaces. There were no rules in terms of numbers of reels and formats that made up a film. The projectionist was combining different films in one spectacle changing every time the sequence. the spectator were free to comment , make up their stories, fight or move in the space. In those days there were no distribution systems, no theaters for screenings, no finished versions of films and no real business behind."¹¹⁷

117 J. Kelsey, "Pedestrian Cinema" found in *"Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art"* p.115 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

ALTERAZIONI VIDEO PRODUCTION PRESENTS:

Blind Barber

A TURBO FILM BY ALTERAZIONI VIDEO

STARRING:

RAGNAR KJARTANSSON
FREDDY SPAGHETTI
EVA MATTES
WOLFGANG STHEALE
ADAM KLEINMANN
MIKE EGAN
URI ARAN

PRODUCED BY:

PERFORMA 11
DISPARI&DISPARI PRODUCTION
ALESSANDRO MAGI

NEW YORK, 2011



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE BLIND BARBER NEW YORK

Poster of Blind barber, turbo film by Alterazioni Video, New York, 2012

It was a dismantled cinema, similar to how we consume moving images through online platforms today. Turbo Film survival skills took from these experiences to produce addictive and compelling Cinema events.

Turbo Films declare their distance from expanded Cinema and other art cinema manipulation. What seems in the art world to be a fragmented cinema expansion is never festive or epic as those first historical cinema experiences or the Turbo Films of today. The art system today lags behind the multi-faceted shapes of moving images objects that are circulating online. Instead of being in front, art seems to have step back to the rear of cultural production.

As a response, Turbo Films possess a speed of circulation and camouflaged distribution techniques. Thanks to their playful approach, they look more like a painting forgotten on the sidewalk than a piece of museum quality video art. Turbo Films have abandoned the orbit of linear storytelling and entered the forest of unpredictable narrative directions and new semantic connections. The fragmented nature of the narrative structures of Turbo films, in conception and editing, expresses the ever-changing state of cinematic narrative. The full experience of a Turbo Film goes behind the narrative text of the films. Images are no longer a corollary of texts, they become the message. Each image is chosen for its metaphoric meaning, never existing as a bridge or support to a narrative storyline. Most likely, the main distribution channel of Turbo Films is the web. It is in this context that Turbo Films can be constantly regenerated into new experimental shapes and forms.

From a production point of view, there can be no Turbo Film continuous interferences from the “outside” world and from the working labor team (anyone involved) during the creative process.

This premise provokes a different, horizontal approach to the set. During the production of Turbo Film, scenes are filmed simultaneously by multiple cameramen without prior planning. Like war-zone embedded journalists, the documentary style crews of Turbo Films follow a sequence of ignited situations, improvising scenes and cinematic developments while dramatizing what is found on the field.

Turbo Films are the outcome of an attitude, a way of doing things, a way to record reality and experience without objectiveness but with strong ethics and style.

13 The Turbo Carnival

Duncan Reiki, a former Plymouth student, in his PhD thesis *“Not Art: an Action History of British Underground Cinema,”* liberates underground cinema from the institutionalized national art culture by referencing the historical discourse of popular Carnivals of the middle ages. I find this argument very significant for explaining what happens on a Turbo Film set.

He states:

“My purpose is to strip away this mesh and so enable the contemporary participants of the culture to take effective action against anti-democratic, authoritarian and elitist tendencies within the wider culture of experimental film/video. In opposition to Avant-Garde histories of experimental film and video, I shall (re)-define Underground Cinema not as a historical phase or a medium specific aesthetic, but as an anarchic hybrid subculture which combines elements of experimental film and video, amateurism, Bohemianism and Anti-Art. The crucial strategy of this (re)definition will be to liberate the Underground from the legitimate history of Art and (re)-contextualize it into the illegitimate and subversive history of popular culture.”

While his antagonistic approach is inspiring, I am looking for a more integrative and less ideological cinematic apparatus. What is applicable to the description of Turbo Films from Reiki’s thesis is his reference to middle age carnivals. No other historical example could better describe the creative processes of shooting a Turbo Film.

He describes the carnivals of the Middle Ages as an alternative event to the serious culture of Nobility and Church. Here, instead, was a participatory event open to the whole community without hierarchy and without a separation between performers and audience.

The carnivals had an ambivalent nature, containing popular humor, grotesque realism, without the imposition of an authority. The carnivals were celebrating the bodies and lives of people.

They had a utopian essence, offering a momentary glimpse of equality, abundance, freedom, and amusement for all, rich or poor.

In guise of a lack of central control and because of the diversities of its participants the carnivals were offering a sense of anarchy by being in process and nomadic and by playing with social and sexual identities. What carnivals became today has nothing to do with the intensity and entropic qualities of its predecessors.

Reiki describes events that were stretched along two weeks (like most Turbo Films shootings) , a period of time of anarchic, Dionysian and euphoric parties, filled with short live spectacles and stunts, where sagacious and ironic stories on kings, Gods and power were shared. During this period hierarchies were suspended in an horizontal experiment of true madness and anarchic happiness.

Nomadic performers were traveling in groups from one celebration to the next one setting up their cosmopolitan autonomy cities as real T.A.Z.¹¹⁸

We could say that Turbo Films during their making, activates a similar entropic system.

A Turbo Film, in its process absorbs the most edgy, transgressive and grotesque stereotypes of the local community in which it takes place. The constant presence of improvisation and spontaneity in the creative process, negate the possibility for a centralized and hierarchical control by the authors, opening up each film to new horizons and new interferences.

Imagine a large pot on the fire. All around it there is cold wind and snow. Someone starts throwing some spices in the pot, someone else adds some veggies, a hunter arrives from the woods and throws in some big chunks of meat. Everything cooks together for quite a long time. Substances start melting into the other, the color changes, and the actual flavor of the soup seems to be different than the sum of all the ingredients. Some bones and some skin is taken out and given to the dog. No vegetarians allowed, no vegans, not as a choice, but because nobody is actually taking control of the recipe. You can't guarantee a final flavor or mix, but when you are starving and you eat it, it tastes delicious. Now take this soup and turn it into Turbo filmmaking.

118 Hakim Bey, "T.A.Z. *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy Po- etic Terrorism*", (The Anarchist Library, 1985, found in "*Chaos: The Broadsheets of Ontological Anarchism*", by Grim Reaper Press (Weehawken, New Jersey, 1985).

The pot is an email body, an empty one. Someone is inspired and writes down an idea or a topic, a group of people, mostly unemployed and with very little to lose start adding links and questions, they start mocking the initial idea and start presenting better ones. The email becomes a shared stream of images, links and short videos, apparently not related, but somehow considered by someone useful in the discourse. Nobody can tell where the film is going, what will be the main question at hand. Nobody has control of the process.¹¹⁹ When the shooting starts, the pot stays with us. Ideas, references, contributions have been cooking already for months online.

Often a last minute character appears directly on the set (the hunter). Often it is a Spaghetti Western rude guy that doesn't care what people are trying to do, sometimes he is a freak, most of the time he is drunk, high, or pissed off. He throws on the table an amazing opportunity, a new perspective on the plot/pot (chunks of meat). You were looking for a beautiful girl and he comes out with two twin dwarfs. It's never planned, impossible to imagine preproduction, but is often accepted. The cooking does the rest. More salt, more spices. This is what happens in the production of a Turbo Film.

The crews are all independent, but they rely on each other. There is no director, no production manager, no continuity, no stylist.

Who you thought was the director is now building a bar with the locals, while the DP is playing the soundtrack in a basement with a newly formed band and the executive producer is getting high alone while shooting what is probably going to become the film pack-shot.

This horizontality, this ability to lose control of the creative process, requires trust in the fact that the film will take care of itself and of the situation. Something will always happen on the set, you just have to be ready to grab it, like a samurai in the wind. This flamboyant improvisation is at the heart of Turbo Films.

This fresh and dull way of intending filmmaking that winks back at previous historical experiences, while adapting them to the contemporary reality in which we live.

¹¹⁹ It's like being in a Italian bar with locals and plan a prank, everyone agrees, nobody takes responsibilities.



Carnival, Johannes Lingelbach (1622-1674)

14 The Films

In the following chapter I will analyze particular scenes from Turbo Films to demonstrate instances in which my theoretical framework meets my practice in a dialectic interplay

1.1 *The Attraction Image in Artists' Serial Killer and Black Rain*

In *Artists' Serial Killer* and *Black Rain*, the narratives intertwine with the imagery, through a sequence of visual associations and open (yet not abstract) montage trajectories, while remaining bound up in a basic narrative structure.

This narrative structure solely has the function of justifying spectacular, eye-catching acts occurring in a performative and situationist practice, without any linear relation between pre-production, production and post-production.

In *Artists' Serial Killer*¹²⁰ the performative event of the film structured its pre-production process. In this instance, we convinced a staff member of the digital archive of an important museum to create bootleg copies of the entire video art collection, a harmless criminal act that started the genealogy of Turbo Films. This copied material was manipulated to create a mash-up pop-horror film made comprising artworks of great masters. For the first time, the digitized masterpieces were treated as b-movie footage and re-assembled as a horror film.

In a period in which YouTube and similar platforms still had many technical restrictions, digitized films had to travel physically in the form of hard drives and CDs adding more of a thrill to the pre-production process.

The plot of the film is very basic. As in Corbucci films,¹²¹ the storyline is simply a trajectory through which short spectacles and cinematic attractions happen. In this case, a man falls asleep on a train and dreams of getting lost in a forest. There, he encounters an old and isolated house where a great number of famous artists live together. The protagonist, in the form of the camera eye, enters the house and kills them all.

At the end of the film he is awakened by a fly and finds himself trapped in a disturbing Matthew Barney film frame. Adopting a film structure based on the

120 Alterazioni Video, "Artists Serial Killer" digital film, 12'25", first presented at Manifesta 7, Rovereto, 2008.

121 Sergio Corbucci, "Django", feature film, B.R.C. Produzione S.R.L., 1966.

Kuleshov effect¹²² and shot as if the camera is the eye of the viewer,¹²³ short assassinations follow one after the other, in a stream of attractions. The audience becomes the assassin and every great artist it encounters dies.

Transforming high art into a pop-horror production is in some ways similar to how Spaghetti Westerns transformed the American Western Classics.

Corbucci, Leone, and other Spaghetti Western directors were taking the epic propagandistic American Western style of John Wayne, and after emptying it of historical meanings, nationalistic efforts, and classical storyline, they used it as a global attraction and potentially revolutionary political format, depending on the context in which the films were shown.

Artists' Serial Killer empties the original footage of the artworks by de-contextualizing it and re-presenting it online under a new light.

Turbo Films exist on a trajectory that runs from the Spaghetti Western attraction image described by Martin Jones and the user-generated "YouTube neorealism" and that is similar to what Godard and Lazzaretto describe as 'mental memory images'.¹²⁴

The articulated structure of Turbo Films pull the film away from home video and spontaneous YouTube content, while maintaining a freshness and honesty. In respect to Spaghetti Westerns, Turbo Film often differentiates from their relationship with 'the milieu', yet maintaining a similar revolutionary spirit. The de-contextualization of the characters in Spaghetti Westerns, their disconnection from a location, typical of the attraction image, is substituted in Turbo Films with its opposite: a strong connection often appears between characters, the stream of spectacles, and the location in which the action happens, with its social and political specificities. Often a chosen location for a Turbo Films is treated as a main character that speaks for itself through memory images.

An example of this strong sense of location can be found in *Black Rain*, a Turbo Film shot in the small Italian fisherman island of Lampedusa.

122 "The Kuleshov effect" It is a mental phenomenon by which viewers derive more meaning from the interaction of two sequential shots than from a single shot in isolation, cited from : https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kuleshov_Effect , last time accessed September, 2015.

123 Dziga Vertov, "*Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*", ed. Annette Michelson, trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984).

124 Definition by Jean-Luc Godard, in "*A Companion to Jean Luc Godard*", edited by Tom Conley and T Jefferson Kline (Wiley Blackwell, Chicheseter, 2014).



Poster from Artist's Serial Killer , Turbo Film , Alterazioni Video, 2009

The island is sadly known for the thousands of Africans that every year try to migrate in Europe, traversing the ocean and landing on the small island after their incredible journeys. The film structure is simple. A man, alone, (in this case a junkie journalist), lands on an island and wanders around in search of a rare phenomenon called Black Rain, in which African people fall – like rain - from the sky. This is how the writer Filippo Anniballi describes *Black Rain*, after being part of the crew for two weeks:

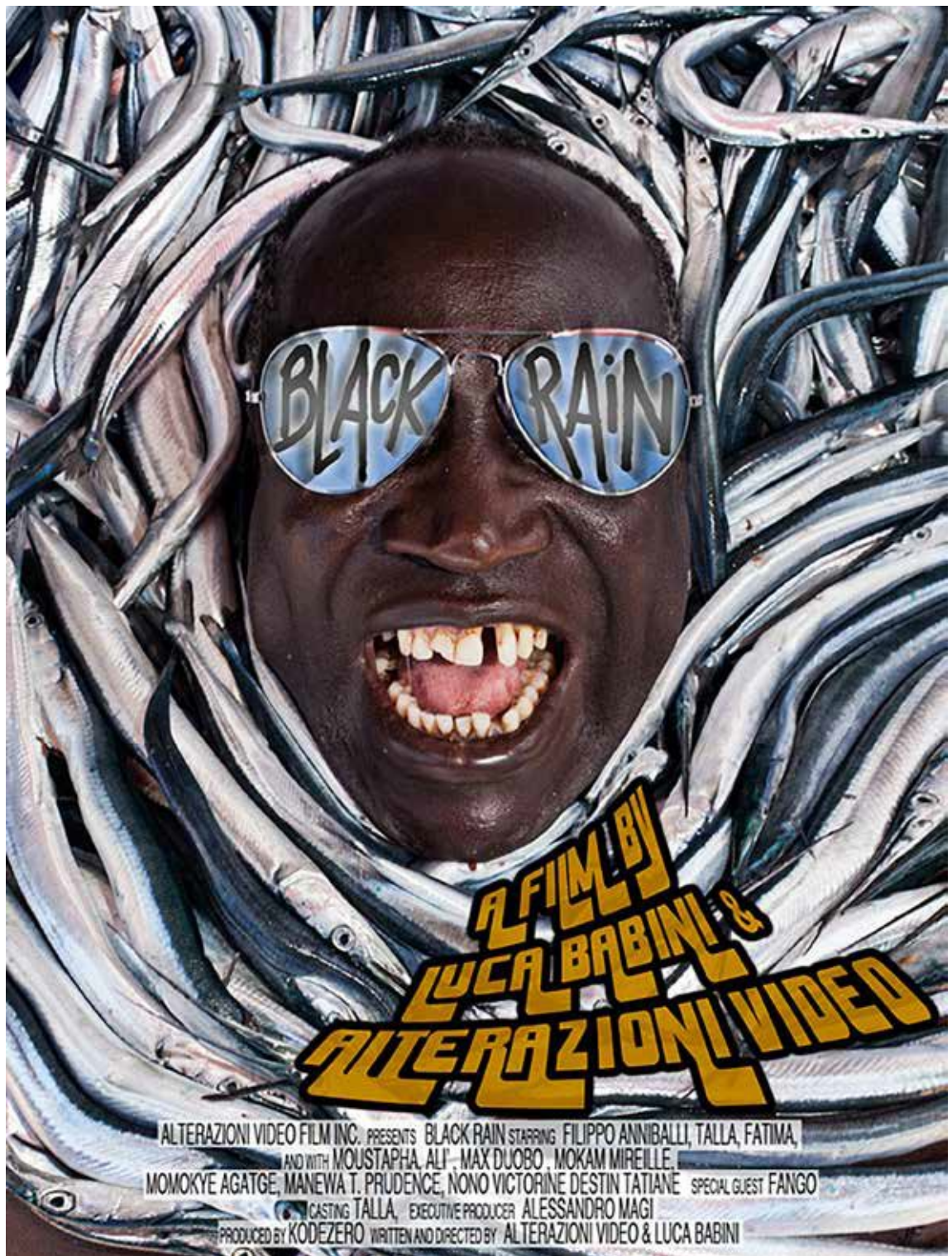
“[...] a turbo film is basically a low budget flick where improvisation, gonzo mojo and situationism give birth to what I call rock ‘n’ roll cinema. [...] Truth is, the way a turbo film rocks, the screenplay is only something to attract producers; something they can fan themselves with when it’s too hot. Sweet. Also, when you find yourself in exotic locations and you hide behind a biblical bush, the script is a natural substitute for toilet paper. So basically, a screenplay has many unconventional uses. A producer pacifier, a good screenplay can also always justify excessive bar tabs, exotic dancer receipts, camera and sound equipment rentals, hash and bribe money. The rest is pure improvisation, the movie will unfold gingerly as people are met and stories are told.”¹²⁵

Black Rain is an attempt to clash artistic skills, basic image manipulation techniques, online aesthetics, and irony with a dramatic real situation. The actors in the films are real refugees that made it by boat against all odds. In the film they are celebrated as super heroes and icons of modernity.

The plot and most of the creative ideas in the film were developed during the shooting. The costumes in the last scenes for example were made using pieces of wrecked migrant boats found on the island’s boat cemetery. In the news, migrants were presented as desperate and hopeless, with no future ahead. The goal of the film was to ironically overturn this image with a more festive and yet authentic representation of the feelings and visions of those who made it up to the Italian shore. It’s not a bird, it’s not a plane, it’s African Black Rain!¹²⁶

125 Filippo Anniballi, “Lampedusa, An African Holocaust on Europe’s Doorstep”, published in Citizen Brooklyn magazine: <http://www.citizenbrooklyn.com/topics/pov/lampedusa-an-african-holocaust-on-europes-doorstep/> , last time accessed July 2015.

126 This is the refrain of the final song of the film *Black Rain* by Alterazioni Video. The whole soundtrack was written and recorded during the shooting in collaboration with the cast and other African refugees.



Poster from Black rain, Turbo Film , Alterazioni Video, 2011

14.1 Surfing With Satoshi: Database Film and New Cinematic Qualities of the Poor Image

Lev Manovich explained the specific qualities of database films, analyzing Vertov masterpiece *The Man with the Movie Camera*. The perspectives on editing and filmmaking presented by Vertov and Manovich are useful as references while introducing the next Turbo Film titled “*Surfing With Satoshi*”,¹²⁷ shot two years ago in Puerto Rico. The film plot is very simple and similar to that of *Black Rain*. A CIA agent is sent to Puerto Rico to chase the inventor of Bitcoins, Satoshi Nakamoto.¹²⁸ At the time of the film shooting, the world was trying to discover the real identity of Satoshi Nakamoto (a fake name under which one of the most dangerous minds of the twenty first century is hiding).

I imagined Satoshi as secretly speculating about art and finance while hiding in a cave with a group of creative minds and programmers right in the middle of a jungle in Puerto Rico. With the CIA on the chase, he was close to starting a new financial revolution.

In the film Satoshi is never found, but traces of his passage are discovered along the way, some of which are hidden in an incredible cave in the heart of the Caribbean jungle.

Here, again, the story - introduced at the beginning of the film in a monologue by the writer Eric Banks - unfolds as an excuse to tie together a series of short spectacles performed by local communities that stereotyped and portrayed themselves, with a group of international artists that joined the festive film shooting.

The real protagonist of the film is most likely Puerto Rico itself, as a community with a very strong personality, where many sub-cultures flourish to generate a numerous amount of content online. During the pre-production phase of the film, most of this online content was selected and archived in a Tumblr page that functioned as an ongoing storyboard.

127 Alterazioni Video, “*Surfing With Satoshi*”, digital film 25’ 48”, produced by Ramik-en Crucible Gallery, New York, 2013.

128 Bit Coins definition: Bitcoin is a digital currency created in 2009. It follows the ideas set out in a white paper by the mysterious Satoshi Nakamoto, whose true identity has yet to be verified. Bitcoin offers the promise of lower transaction fees than traditional online payment mechanisms and is operated by a decentralized authority, unlike government issued currencies. Investopedia.com, <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bitcoin.asp> , last time accessed July 2015.

In few months was collected a great number of animated gifs, jpegs, videos, local stories, and urban legends that strongly related to Puerto Rico and used this archive as a kind of inspirational board.

The visual richness of the storyboard became the basis for composing the vertical scrolling of the film. This technical solution provides the audience with the impression of watching an online visual database of disconnected clips that are somehow related.

Some of the scenes that we shot were actually re-enactments of Puerto Rican user-generated videos we found online. By re-enacting this imaginary, we added a cinematic quality to these images only to lose it again during the editing process by treating the footage as poor images. The final aesthetic of the film is a flamboyant celebration of the poor image and the subculture of ghetto aesthetics with a cinematic echo. In this film, as well as in most Turbo Films the soundtrack was written and recorded on site with the collaboration of local musicians and improvised singers.

The cave props were made by a group of artists then presented as a gallery exhibition together with a catalogue.¹²⁹ The strong and vivid artistic community of San Juan collaborated in many aspects to the filmmaking. The film became a melting pot of collaboration, starting from the fundraising process of the production itself.

In fact the entire budget was raised online through an extensive crowd-funding campaign that aggregated hundreds of people around the project. The online Bitcoin community and some of the coders of the currency took part as actors in the promo videos prior to the filming. We received video clips from Milan, Amsterdam, Berlin, and New York. Some of this material made it into the film, others will most likely join the plot in future edits.

129 Ramiken Crucible, "Abscess, Rectum, Septum, Cave, 2012, 2013, 2014", Cueva Archilla, Puerto Rico, exhibition catalogue, published by Ramiken Crucible Gallery, New York, 2015.

The film is an interconnected series of stunts inspired by a web aesthetic made of music video clips, digital art, and poor images. In her famous text on the value of images, the artist and writer Hito Steyerl describes the life and spam of what she calls the poor image as following:

“The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image, a preview, a thumbnail, an errant idea, an itinerant image distributed for free, squeezed through slow digital connections [...] Poor images show the rare, the obvious, and the unbelievable—that is, if we can still manage to decipher it.

[...] Poor images are poor because they are not assigned any value within the class society of images—their status as illicit or degraded grants them exemption from its criteria. [...] In this light, perhaps one has to redefine the value of the image, or, more precisely, to create a new perspective for it. Apart from resolution and exchange value, one might imagine another form of value defined by velocity, intensity, and spread. Poor images are poor because they are heavily compressed and travel quickly. They lose matter and gain speed.”¹³⁰

This speed is slowed down in the re-enactment process and the contextualization of a cinema. By incorporating poor images into a storyline we slow down their digestion, and we have the chance to comment on them. If we observe the genealogy of most of the main scenes of *Surfing with Satoshi*, we should perceive that we are facing a copy of a copy of a copy. For example in the scene in which a CIA informant gets his car washed by two girls using their butts, we are looking at a re-enactment of a clip found online, made by local Puerto Ricans, themselves re-enacting American Hip Hop music videos. We absorbed their recycled aesthetic and presented it in a cinematic format. Hito Steyerl considers the nature of the poor image to be the most direct portrait of contemporary visual culture:

“The poor image is no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation. In short: it is about reality.”¹³¹

130 Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image”, published in “*The Wretched of the screen*” (e-flux journal, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2012).

131 Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image”, published in “*The Wretched of the screen*” (e-flux journal, Sternberg Press, Berlin, 2012).

14.2 Turbo Films as a Form of Resistance: *Per Troppo Amore* and the Case of the *Incompiuto Siciliano* Project

“What is a style?

A style is a trait which is both shared and a mark of distinction, that identifies and grasps the signs of its times. It has aesthetic, ethical, and anthropological effects. It is a repeatable practice which becomes layered, producing followers and variations on a theme.

“*Incompiuto Siciliano*” has founded its own ethics and aesthetics that we must fully come to terms with, without trivializing it or taking the easy way out. Ethics and aesthetics: the two columns underpinning any style. One of the most effective metaphors for describing this limb of land extending into the Mediterranean, into the present.”¹³²

Another quality of Turbo Films that we should underline is the constant aspiration towards the ethical and sociopolitical. The idea is that through an open and participatory creative film process it is possible to find new perspectives on specific issues within the communities we encounter. Probably the most successful example of these attempts can be found in the Turbo film *Per Troppo Amore*.¹³³

14.2.1 Brief Introduction to the Film Background

The Turbo Film *Per Troppo Amore* is the final product of three years of production from Alterazioni Video, involving a great number of artists, writers, musicians, art institutions, and political parties, along with international and national media partners. This project involved an entire community in Sicily, in the small town of Giarre. Over the years this film has been the subject matter of studies for doctorate researches around Europe.

We started the project trying to change the perception that Italians had of Eco-monsters, the unfinished public buildings built all around Italy in the last 30 years by organized crime, corrupted politicians and incredibly creative criminal minds. Finding new angles on this subject was the only way to bring these topics back to media attention.

¹³² Wu Ming, “*Fenomenologia di uno stile*” article published in “*Incompiuto Siciliano*”, edited by Valentina Ciuffi (Abitare, Phenomenology of a Style, Milan, 2009).

¹³³ Alterazioni Video, “*Per Troppo Amore*”, digital film 22’ 36”, XII Venice Biennale of Architecture, Italian pavillion, Venice, 2010.



Still Frame from Surfing With Satoshi, by Alterazioni Video, Porto Rico, 2012

This unfinished constructions, around Italy comprised, more than 600 concrete useless “cathedrals,” that like scars are traceable throughout all of Italy. We found an Olympic swimming pool stadium in which the pool was one meter too short, huge polo stadiums for communities without horses, ghost hospitals, parking lots with no exits, theaters with stages that were too small, dams with no water. These buildings intercepted public funding and have been constantly modified over a thirty-year period of time, a criminal creative process to not complete the buildings.

We decided then to celebrate this architectural style and these buildings in memory of our recent past. We proposed to the local community of Giarre, a small town with a high concentration of unfinished public buildings to become the capital of a new architectural style that we named “Incompiuto Siciliano”.

The most influential architecture magazine in Italy, *Abitare*, wrote about the project in these terms:

“The term “incompletion” refers to architectural and infrastructural works whose construction has been halted, and which can be seen in locations throughout Italy. They are mainly public works, and for a variety of reasons (design errors, clashing political decisions, inaccurate cost estimates, contractor bankruptcies, evident disregard of building regulations, disappearance of funds) their construction has been shelved, leaving just a series of ruins, abandoned even before having been used at all. Alterazioni Video presents a series of cultural and artistic operations that give dignity to these structures after their abandonment: documentaries featuring interviews with the personalities involved and the structures’ users; artistic installations that transfer the visual and perceptive experience of incompletion into museum setting, along with extensive documentation and archives designed to be expanded by contributions from the general public. In fact, the sum of these relics of never-attained futures is so vast that it can be considered as a true architectural and visual style, representing Italy and the age in which they were produced. The highest concentration of incomplete works can be found in Sicily, and so the core of the project and the consequent reflections start from there, imagining a style that becomes progressively national.”¹³⁴

134 Alterazioni Video, *“Incompiuto Siciliano”*, edited by Valentina Ciuffi (*Abitare*, Phenomenology of a Style, Milan, 2009)

Our project aimed to change the public opinion of these sites. We wanted to celebrate them and find a key that could bring back to the media what has been considered the largest fraudulent investment by organized crime in Italian territory. Paul Virillo wrote an introduction to the project, supporting our attempt to give a new historical function to these sites:

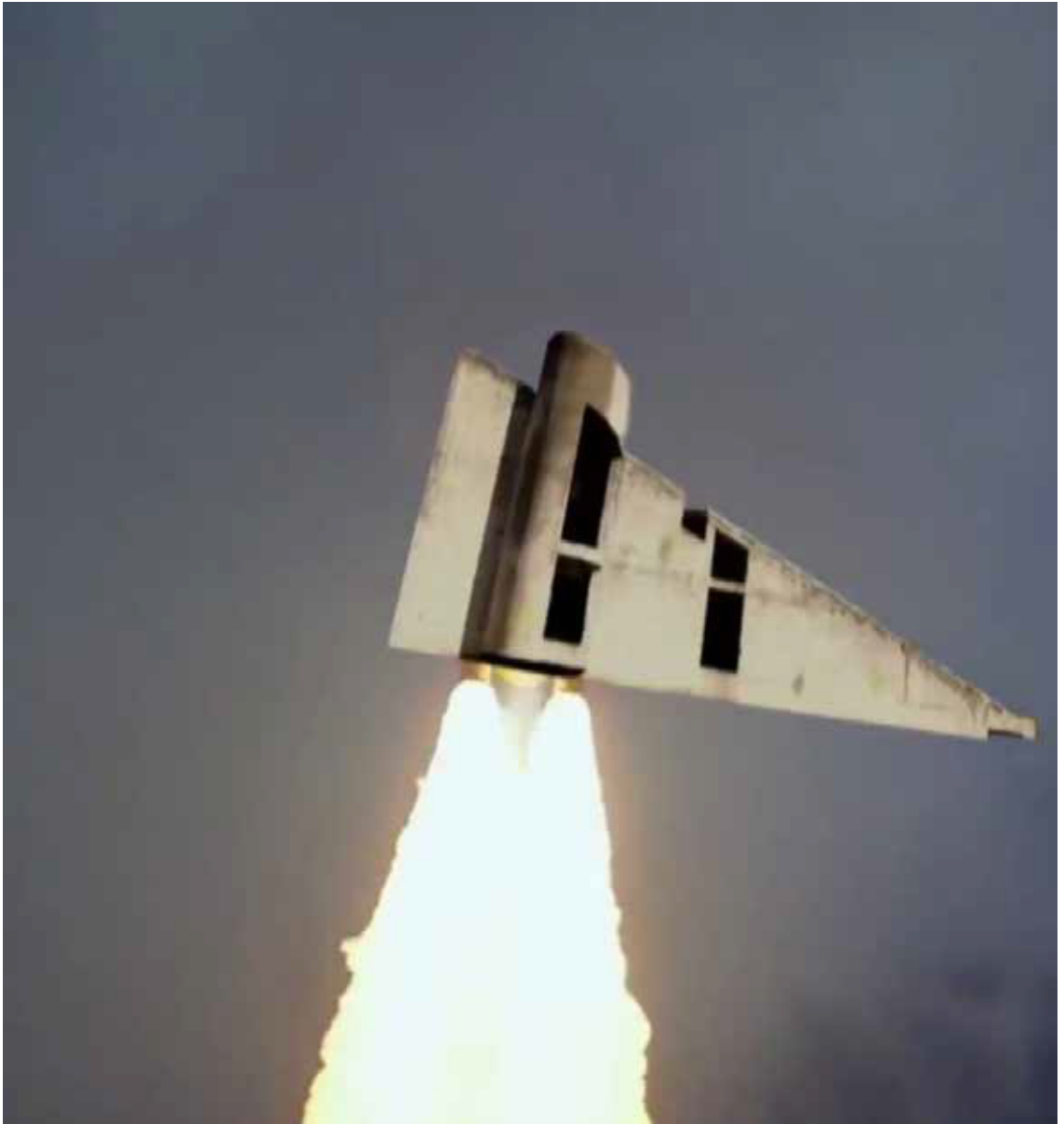
“No modern cult cocoons our obsolete structures and abandoned construction sites [...] a curious form of mental blindness leads us to ignore them, as if they were unworthy of our attention. As negative monuments to architectural intention, they enjoy, like history’s positive monuments, the heritage status of ruins that testify to the victories and defeats of wars fought in some distant past. Regardless of the fate they have suffered, the success of these structures as architectural statements is never called into question. They do have a “style” of sorts, a function of their ongoing incompleteness.”¹³⁵

The first outcome of the project that received media attention was an art exhibition inspired by the aesthetics of these buildings.¹³⁶ Then a series of national TV shows and opinion leaders invited us to learn more about the change of perception that we were trying to achieve. A further result of the project was a public vote in the city council of Giarre for the institution of a real Archeological park around these monuments. The conclusive act of the project is the film, entirely shot in the archeological park of Giarre, a psychedelic soap opera with extraterrestrial invasions.

Here again, by celebrating the archeological park and presenting the festive, self-ironic, and playful character of Sicilians, the location and the community that comprises it became the main protagonists of the Turbo film.

135 Paul Virillo, “Bringing the unbliveable alive” article published in *“Incompiuto Siciliano”*, edited by Valentina Ciuffi (Abitare, Phenomenology of a Style, Milan, 2009)

136 Alterazioni Video, *“Concrete Island: Incompiuto Siciliano”*, solo gallery exhibition, VM21 Gallery, Rome, 2007.



Still frame from Per Troppo Amore, by Alterazioni Video, Porto Rico, 2012

14.2.2 The Plot

Due to a mechanical failure, an extraterrestrial is forced to make an emergency landing on Planet Earth. A local shepherd looking for his lost flock witnesses this exceptional moment. In a euphoric panic, he runs into town to alert the local TV station.

In the meantime, in the little village of Giarre, life goes on: politics, exercise, sexual adventures, and family quarrels. The alien, personified by the anthropologist Marc Auge', takes the form of a dog to inconspicuously inspect the area, while the village prepares for the official opening of the local archeological park.

The plot holds together a stream of cinematic stunts around the unfinished structures. In the opening scene, the visionary paradox of Blufi Dam, the largest Dam of Europe in a place without water, is the backdrop for the alien landing. The music track, a western tune, emphasizes the extraterrestrial encounter between a broken spaceship, a biblical pastor with no flock, and a dam without water. The scene can be viewed as a prelude for the clash between reality and fantasy permeates the film. By playing with a stereotypical cinematic language we introduced the epic topics of the film, synthesized in Human failure and the beauty surrounding it.

During the film shooting we had the opportunity to revive these monuments and bring to light what was hidden in plain sight.

In the Town Council scene we encounter a short circuit between reality and fiction. The assembly was actually happening before our eyes. The "actors" are the real local governors and politicians responsible for the eco-monsters. They proudly act out oratory performances in favor of the park institution and for our cameras and the scene appears fictional and unreal. The park was officially instituted. This fact brought the attention of the international press and became the subject matter for reportages both in favor of and against the absurdity of the project. The film - premiered at the Venice Biennale of Architecture - became a powerful promotional tool to bring the attention back to this community. Again the POV, or camera eye, becomes the way through which the audience discovers these sites. This is a strategy to make the audience feel estranged and disoriented while re-discovering their 'planet' as if it was the first time.

Through the film we were able to change the perspective of these places and at the same time create new opportunities to revitalize a depressed community. In fact, the community of Giarre is now promoting the area in tour guides and online in the attempt to develop a new economy behind this architecture. *Per Troppo Amore* and the *Incompiuto Siciliano* project share this deep trust in the healing power of stories. Through a pata-fiction ensemble, the ruins of mafia speculation became the ashes through which creative attitudes could emerge, transforming infected landmark scars into powerful creative devices. The community became inspired to imagine a new economy emerging from the dead ruins; an economy based on tourism, performing arts, and a sense of proudness that was stolen a long time ago.

In this film the boundaries between fiction and reality are ignored. They both appropriate from each other what they need in order to share a vision and present a new epic potential future, in this case an archeological park.



Adv Campaign for Incompiuto Siciliano Project, by Alterazioni Video, Italy, 2011

14.3 *The African Turbo Films*

All My friends Are Dead was the first complete Turbo Film¹³⁷ shot by Alterazioni Video. This experience shaped the very nature of what would become the turbo films apparatus. This was the occasion in which I understood the conceptual, semantic and sociopolitical potentialities of Turbo Film.

Ambaradan was the most recent film produced. Shot in Ethiopia, it contains many Turbo Film characteristics, crystallized in a multifaceted epic adventure.

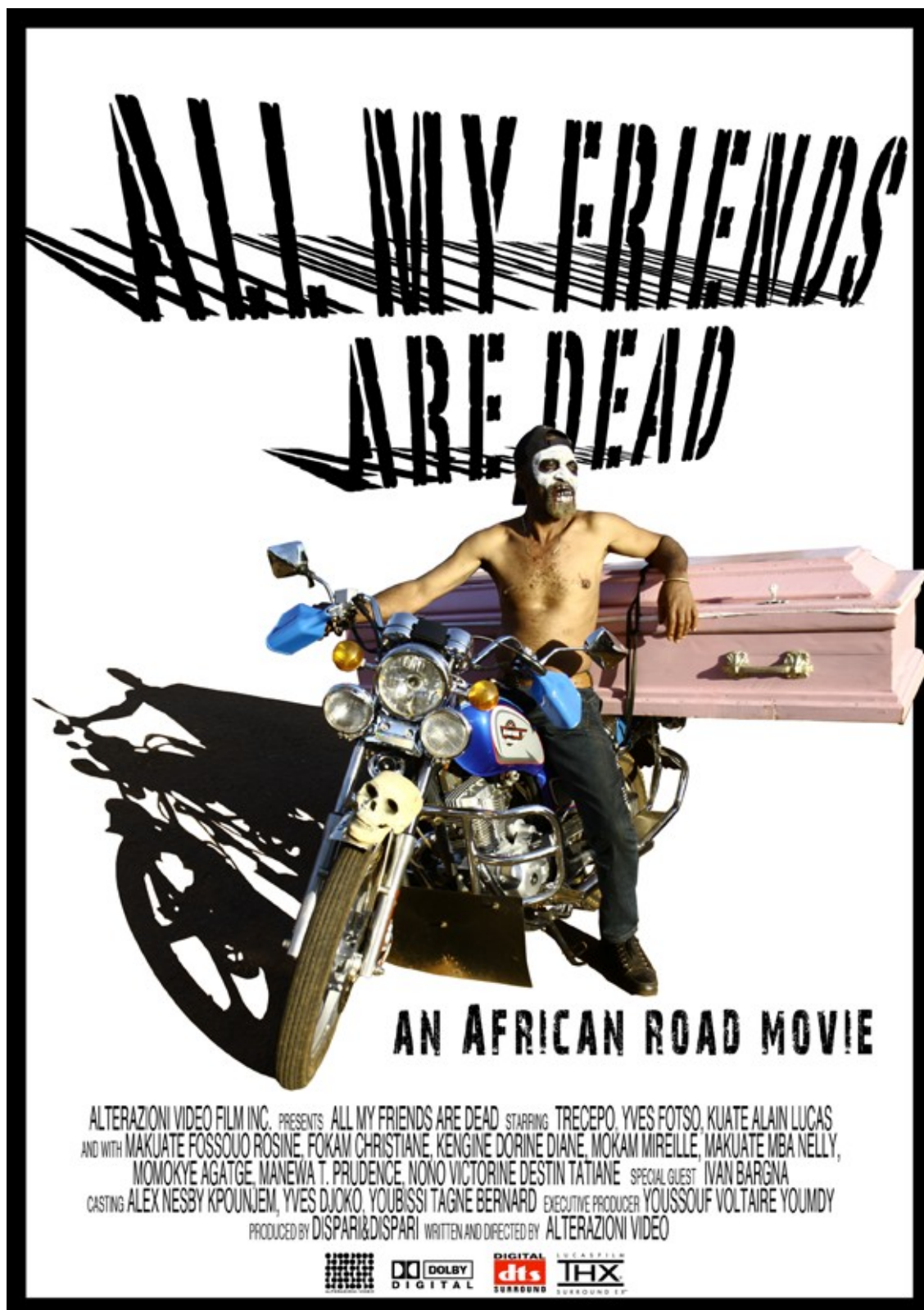
14.3.1 *All My Friends are Dead*

All my Friends are Dead originated from the experience Alterazioni Video had in the Bandjoun village in western Cameroon while joining a scientific expedition of anthropologist Ivan Bargna. During this time, I had the chance to familiarize myself with the society and culture of the Bamileke tribe, whose openness to modernity goes hand in hand with a strong sense of tradition. For example, it is believed by the Bamileke tribe that their king, despite driving a Mercedes, continues to have his spiritual double in the leopard and has the power to make it rain to fertilize the fields.

The area of Africa where the village is located, is well known as the “Transylvania of Africa” because the tribe actually still believes in zombies and vampires.¹³⁸ By studying this context we discovered that zombies and vampires were catching ground inside the relatively small tribe not because witchcraft was the survival of a dark past, actually it was the language by which the tribe attempted to find meaning in the misery and social injustices of a globalized world, a way to respond to the economic recession and exploitation acted by Chinese corporations

137 “*Artist serial killer*” was the beginning of the saga but no scene was shot in that occasion becoming a sui generis in Turbo film anthology.

138 «Zombie» and «vampires» are also known in Bandjoun, because both Nigerian and American horror films come there in DVD, and because in the local witchcraft imagery, quite similar figures are found, called *faux-morts*, *revenants* (*ghègne mò*), and *vampires* (*dium*) in local French. From Ivan Bargna, “*Between Hollywood and Bandjoun: art activism and anthropological ethnography into the mediascape*”, (- Journal des anthropologues, Paris, 2012).



Poster from *All My Friends Are Dead*, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video

We were invited by Ivan Bargna to shoot a documentary on the tribe and its culture that he had been studying for ten years, in order to collect interviews and anecdotes. Once we arrived to the tribe village, we immediately understood the limits of the classical anthropological approach and the impossibility to record objectively this tribal society and culture.

We decided instead to opt for an improvised horror musical filmed together with the youth of the tribe, that aimed to create a better portrait of the community we were relating to. We formed a local band, we cast the most talented members of the tribe during a night casting party in the village, and we donated, in exchange for the permission to shoot the film, a huge mud sculpture to the king for his personal museum. In few days we were able to start the shooting under the incredulous eyes of the anthropologist.

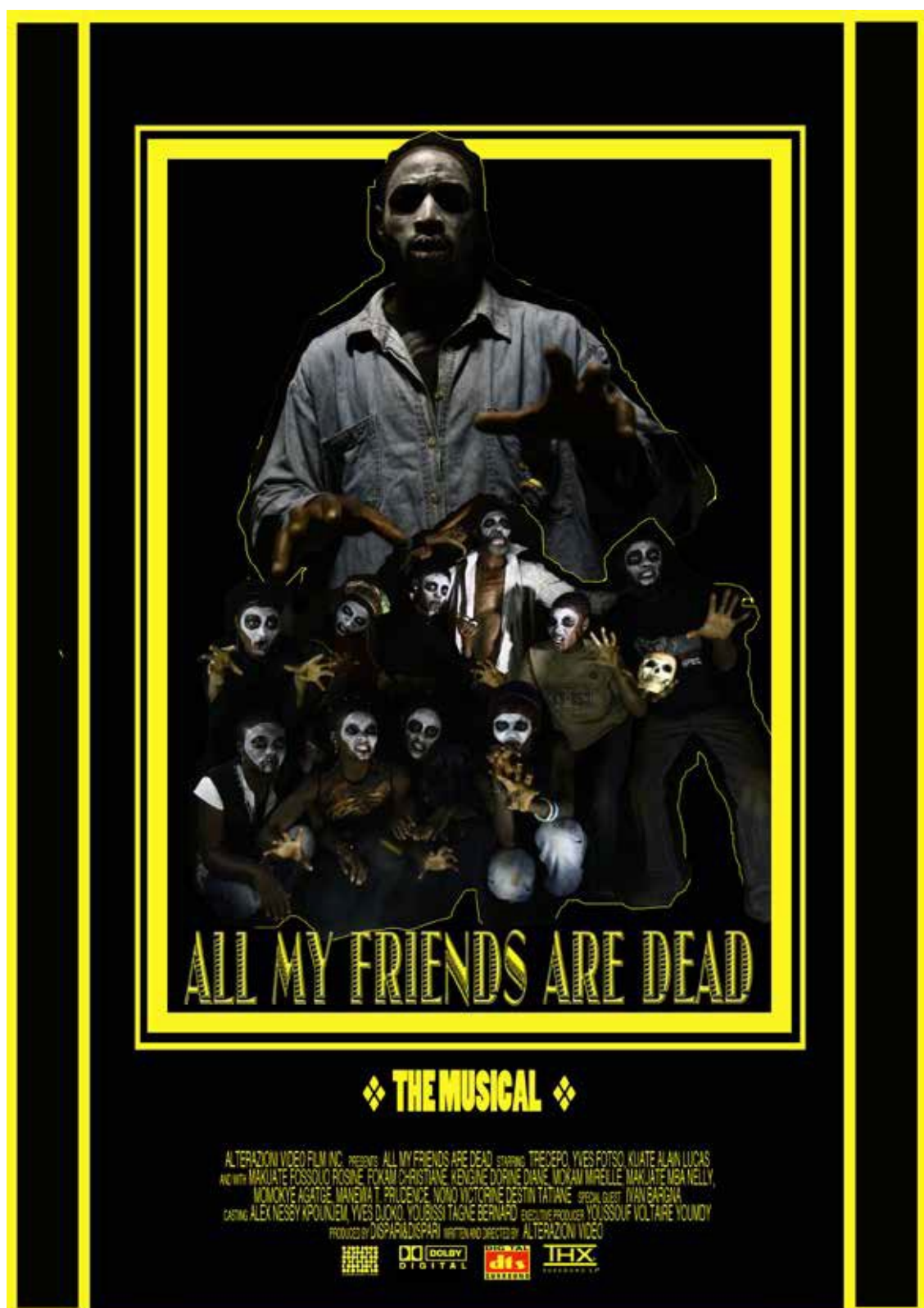
The set became the ethnographic camp for our field of research.

We decided that fear, the object of our investigation, was the only unmovable pillar of the film, that had the goal to disturb the uncertain boundaries between reality and deception, between personal emotions and staged performances, between art and anthropology.

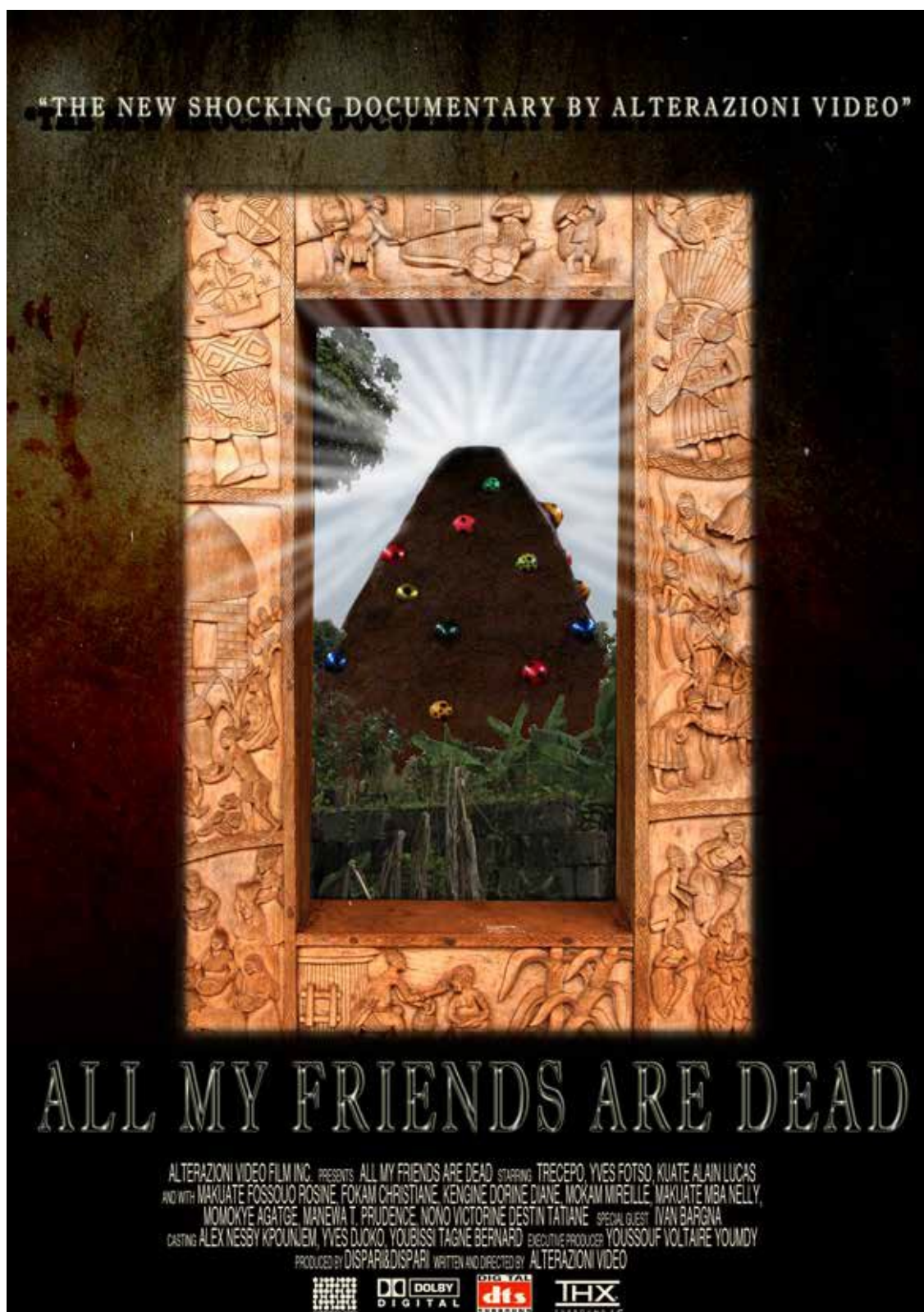
From Hollywood to Bandjoun, zombies are part of a widely shared collective imagination, but in Africa they are also a feared believe and an everyday presence in local witchcraft practices. In the interplay between this two different approaches in fearing and visualizing the unknown, lies the open plot of this complex and disorientating film, in which reality and fiction apparently merge without leaving tangible traces of distinction.

In the film, during the wondering around of the camera-eye, when we encounter the masked warriors dancing in front of their king, and we see western cartoon characters mixed with local spirits and experience an encounter between fiction and documentary, between western pop culture and tribal animist beliefs; drunk, armed warriors acting like western teens on Halloween.

This series of encounters questions our western taboos, demonstrating how a culture of strong believers can play and joke with their own gods.



Poster from *All My Friends Are Dead*, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video



Poster from *All My Friends Are Dead*, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video

This is possible because the Bamileke tribe actually believes that what is truly sacred can't be disturbed or modified by humans no matter what we do. The representations of their gods are simple objects or images that function as reminders, but as with many objects in Africa, they can be repurposed and reused, an attitude that the west has embraced

In a time where blasphemy and violence are common in religious and theological discussions around the world, the Bamileke approach - enriched with irony and pop culture- suggests a more open minded relationship with the sacred that appears ahead of time if compared to the western one.

During the film shooting we were able to collect a lot of footage. The team would split in the morning and come back together at night with a scattered number of scenes for possible films.

We had a rock and roll music session recorded in the middle of the jungle, a fictional blood bath improvised by locals masked as Hollywood zombies in the market, a magical rain of soccer balls for dozens of kids, a fictional ritual, and so on. The whole community took part in the film making process. We gave our cameras to local kids who disappeared for days and returned with footage that we used during the editing.¹³⁹

The film carnival lasted three weeks, with great surprise of the anthropologist who had the chance to record and study the tribe in a completely new and spontaneous environment: our film set.

After we left, the group of Bandjoun people formed during our film produced and shared two self-made fictional feature films, distributed online, that can be considered as the first siblings of Turbo Films.

139 The elephant-men scene, where the king warriors dance while coming out from the sacred temple, was shot by a young Bamileke warrior, the only one that could enter the scene without getting killed.



Still frame from All My Friends Are Dead, by Alterazioni Video, Cameroon, 2009

14.3.1.1 The Film-Making Process

The way that filmmaking process was shared with the tribe members recalls the 'shared anthropology' of Jean Rouch,¹⁴⁰ who, in the fifties, was most likely the first anthropologist/filmmaker sharing with actors and locals every aspect of the creative process in a real collaboration between anthropologist, artist, talent, and local beliefs. The historical relevance of his work lies in the fictional apparatus that Rouch introduced in the field with honesty and transparency.

"For me then, the only way to film is to walk with the camera, taking it where it is most effective and improvising another type of ballet with it in which the camera becomes as alive as the men it is filming. (...) Leading or following a dancer, priest or artisan, the filmmaker is no longer himself, but a 'mechanical eye' accompanied by an 'electronic ear'. It is this strange state of transformation that I have called, by analogy to possession phenomena, 'ciné-trance'." ¹⁴¹

Here again, the cine-trance described by Rouch echoes Vertov's Kino-eye, offering to Turbo Films consolidated terrains for action.

140 Jean Rouch, "La camera et les Hommes. Pour une anthropologie visuelle", (Mouton, Paris, 1978).

141 Jean Rouch, "Principes of Visual Anthropology" edited by Paul Hodcking, p.90 (Mouton de Gruyter, New York, 2003)

14.3.1.2 The Ongoing Film Structure

Online it's possible to find different versions of *All My Friends Are Dead*.

The film has been re-edited many times, scenes and characters have been added that often completely change the perception of what occurred. This multitude of versions respects the polyphonic nature of the content collected; a documentary on African culture, a short thriller film with blood and suspense, a horror musical with choreographed dance scenes.

Each version was intended as a response to the specific context in which the film was screened, but it is only in the sum of the different versions that we can perceive the holistic nature of Turbo films. In this way, more than any other Turbo film, *All My Friends Are Dead*, stands as a bridge between formats and genres.

The film has been screened at anthropology conferences by Mr. Bargna, as well as in art museums and galleries. It has been presented to film festivals and at performances, each time under a different guise.

In the opening scene, the sacred temple of the Bamileke tribe burns to the ground. This reenactment of a true event, stands as a metaphor. The traditional anthropological documentary that was requested prior to filming collapsed during the filmmaking process to open up new coexisting and unexpected cinematic horizons.

14.3.2 Ambaradan: Future visions, short circuits and turbo anthropology.

“Ok I’m going to give it to you, because everyone knows that our audience just go for sensation, they don’t care about intellectual, they want the gloss, they want experiences, they want to feel something, so I’ll give you an image, you probably have seen this image around of a monkey who took a picture of himself, he is upset, he is not taking a selfie you idiot, you think he is, you think is cute and this is why you like it because he is smiling, but smiling for monkeys is not a sign of affection, smiling is how you show your teeth, is a form of aggression, it’s a form of saying fuck off! Why? Why I’m I talking about monkeys? Why am I talking of crises of representation where you don’t understand and in reality the image is aggressive? Because tribes in Africa are doing the same thing, they are grinning at you by giving you fake ideas of exoticism, they are giving you images only for your camera. All you are getting is acting, but they are the creators, they are the tricksters, and you are getting bullshit. You show your bullshit to your friends and you think it’s cool but they are the poachers. They are selling you surrogates of your dreams, and now you are in a shadow, an illusion, an echo of an echo of an echo of an idea that actually sold you out too. Yeah, that’s what you are doing, that’s what you do when you photograph people grinning at you but the grin, it’s really a form of aggression, it’s showing you teeth. You are the one getting played”¹⁴²

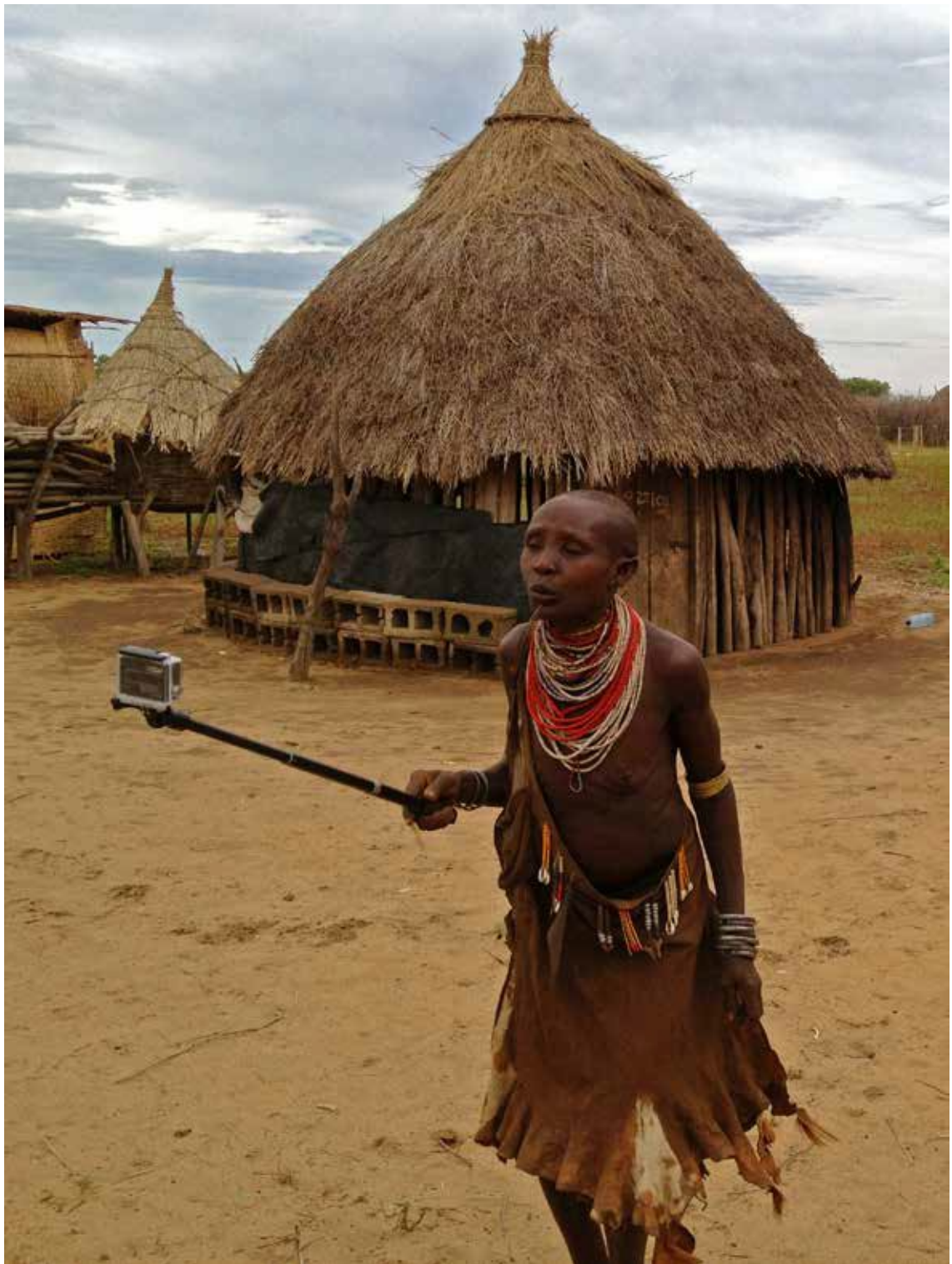
The text above is the transcription of the voiceover of the opening scene of the Turbo Film *Ambaradan*¹⁴³ All you see while hearing the monologue is a black screen.

This introduction was recorded in my studio during the editing process. It was improvised and not planned. Adam came to the studio and went through some footage and while talking about the filmed material and its possible outcomes I decided to record him. The conversation verged around the crisis of representation and ‘ethnographic surrealism’, as the only possibility for visual anthropology.

This film was shot in a small village of the Omo Valley in southern Ethiopia, together with the Karo tribe.

142 Adam Kleinman, Voice over recording for opening scene of “Ambaradan”, New York, 2014.

143 Alterazioni Video, “Ambaradan” , 33’:10”, (Omo Valley, 2014).



Still frame from Ambaradan, Turbo Film by Alterazioni Video, Ethiopia, 2013

The Omo Valley is a site where tribal villages are reduced to human zoos to the benefit of the national tourism industry, and where big corporations have land-grabbed most of the indigenous territory for cotton field plantations. The Omo river - the only river in the region - has been closed off by the largest dam of Africa, leaving two hundred thousand people without access to water forcing tribe displacement and struggle.

We went there and after meeting with one tribe we asked them to imagine their future in a cinematic way. This was basically the script.

We weren't that surprised when they came up with the idea of producing a futuristic techno pop music video to represent their vision.

We decided then to form an improvised tribal girl band and began shooting.

We recorded the music under the shadow of one of the few trees left standing by the plantation workers. We threw a party and built a bar together, remixing our own notion of partying with their celebratory rituals. Because of the Turbo apparatus, the film constantly reshaped with unexpected turns due to the collective process, becoming an intense dialogic mix of contaminated daily indigenous practices with visionary interferences and political point of views.

The crisis of representation of which Adam Kleinman refers in the incipit of this chapter, has its roots in the anthropological studies of George Marcus and Michael Fisher. In the eighties, the postmodern, post-colonial, post-feminist erosion of paradigmatic authority posed significant challenges to anthropology.

The descriptions and analyses derived from notations and observations - which are the very heart of ethnography - have come into serious question epistemologically. Anthropologists have been criticized for their assertions of objectivity in the construction of their ethnographic representations. Today there is a tendency towards a more participative approach, a dialogue between who represents and who is represented.

How does the Turbo apparatus apply to these discourses, and how has it been received by native and indigenous peoples?

Ethnographic filmmaking has been reduced to a thematic issue, a sub-category, and is no longer a research field. In my opinion, the best way to represent a contemporary indigenous population is by re-thinking a narration where their imagination - together with their dreams or nightmares - can be represented in a dialogic structure with the foreign subject. Here filmmaking becomes an encounter, a life situation that allow subjects to express themselves.

Rouch combined indigenous self-representation praxis with Dziga Vertov's ideas of reflexivity and the construction of a filmic truth, that he refers to as "Kino Pravda", and named this re-combination cinema vérité.

Paul Stoller, in his inspiring book, *The Cinematic Griot: The Ethnography of Jean Rouch*, exchanged the objectivist gaze for a "shared anthropology." Stoller writes:

"The filmmaker, instead of pretending not to be there, is right in the middle of the action. All of the people present belong to the same instant, the same place, and engage with each other. For Jean Rouch, film was another way of sharing. He always showed the films he made to the people who were in it. He considered the feedback from his subjects an essential element in their exchange. For him, the shooting of Nigerian spirit possession rituals was by necessity an interactive experience because trance and possession result from the interactions between all the people who were present. A clumsy gesture could put an end to the trance. Under these conditions, the presence of a foreign observer could in no way be neutral, and the participants inevitably interpreted his behavior. What distinguished Jean Rouch's films from those of other documentarians was the blending of artful narrative with scientifically grounded ethnography. This aesthetic fusion was magnificently realized in Rouch's films of ethno-fiction.

Fusing poetry and science, anthropology and fiction, art and life, Jean Rouch showed us the path of wise ancestors and guided us into a wondrous world where we not only encounter others but also ourselves."

Such approach is exemplified in *Ambaradan*, where there is a mix of scenes from different film genres, in such a way that may have never been occurred in an ethnographic film ever before. This happened during the process of sharing the script in which anyone could add a favorite element.

NADA PRESENTS: **AMBARADAN**
A TURBO FILM BY ALTERAZIONI VIDEO

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SATURDAY DECEMBER 6 - 10:30PM
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The film starts as a classic detached documentary. It then turns in a mockumentary in which daily gestures are disrupted by objects introduced by the foreign film crew (ie: a breakfast of goat milk and blood turns into a Coco Pops meal).

There are action film scenes with car chases and AK-47 shooting, there are tribe actors pretending to be drunk, acting like Western DJ's, and in the final scene most of the village participates in a techno music videoclip with a green screen background, opening the scene to imagine possible infinite locations and digital contexts.

This complex structure inevitably brings to a narrative of collapses¹⁴⁴ and a poetics of performed failures. Most cinematic formats don't allow for meaningless, beautiful style deviations from the film structure or narrative. Throwing an action scene in the middle of an ethnographic documentary, or an art performance in a sports film, happens very rarely.

Similarly to what happens when we surf the web. During a YouTube stumble session, we deviate from styles and formats, facing a multi-styled visual experience. Turbo Films could be seen as a recorded surfing sessions. As life itself, Turbo Films have no written pattern to follow. Their main ability is to merge life into art by creating or altering real encounters and situations.

Art is not what is at stake, life is: "Today it appears that 'art' and 'life' are neither opposed to each other, nor have they merged; rather, they have changed places in relation to the outside forces that once more determine their antagonistic relation to each other. Life does indeed look more like art, and this in three distinct ways; firstly, in the Western world, everyday life has in almost all its aspects fallen under the regime of style, it has become the very term of our self-determination and self-reference as individuals and as political collectives: we want to take control of our life by giving it shape and design, not just by 'preserving it' as long as possible, but to improve, maximize, optimize it." ¹⁴⁵

144 Thomas Elsaesser, "European Cinema into the Twenty-First Century: Enlarging the context?" in "The Europeanness of European Cinema" edited by Mary Harrod, Mariana Liz and Alissa Timoshkina, (I.B. Tauris&Co Ltd, London, 2015).

145 Thomas Elsaesser, " 'Constructive Instability', or: The Life of Things as the Cinema's Afterlife?", in "Video Vortex Reader" edited by Geert Lovinik and Sabine Niederer p. 15 (Institute of Network Culture, Amsterdam, 2008).

We could consider *Ambaradan* a prototype of a NIME (New Italian Media Epic).¹⁴⁶

The four main characteristics that define a NIME are present in this film:

Ethical commitment and political necessity are the main motor of the film.

The human zoos built and maintained by corrupted police officers and the tourism industries (I had to bribe a few of them myself in order to be able to film in the village without getting arrested), and the land-grabbing established by H&M and other international corporations for cheap cotton fields, created an actual urgency that shaped the whole process.

The dam that condemned all tribes was completed a few months before our filming. The way this story will end depends on the tribe members ability to envision their future. *The allegoric value and the explicit preoccupation for the loss of future* researched by the Wu Ming in storytelling, is here provided by the place itself.

The Omo Valley is where it is believed that human race began, and by envisioning the end of these millenarian tribes we envision our own end. *A subtle subversion of registers and language* is encountered when the audience hears and sees tribe members rapping and acting in a basic English mixed with their ancestral language. This mix of idioms empowers the narration and the audience imagination.

The blending of fiction and nonfiction is present in its most emblematic forms. We lived with the tribe for several weeks, building a bar and forming a techno pop band, we wrote music together, and shared costumes and food. What was staged by the film crew and what was just really disrupted by time or fashion was suddenly no longer an important distinction .¹⁴⁷

146 Wu Ming, "NEW ITALIAN EPIC versione 2.0, Memorandum 1993-2008: narrati- va, sguardo obliquo, ritorno al futuro", edited by Wu Ming 1, (Einaudi, Milan, 2009).

147 Francesco Monico, "Beyond Darwin: The co-evolutionary path of art, technology and consciousness. *What one could and should say: From Unidentified Narrative Objects to New Italian (Media) Epic*" presented at La Sala Parpalló, (Valencia, 2009).

SECTION 3

15 The Turbo Film Manifesto

The final outcome of this thesis is the formulation of the Turbo Film Manifesto.¹⁴⁸ Intended here as an empirical cinematic apparatus, it aims to synthesize all of the elements and qualities of Turbo Films that we anticipated so far.

A manifesto is generally a call to arms- not just a set of rules- a map through which specific goals can be achieved. For Alain Badiou, “to write a manifesto is to announce that the moment has come to make a declaration, a manifesto always comprises and blurs any distinctions between what it says and when it says it.”¹⁴⁹

Historically, manifestos were the province of kings and princes. It was then taken by early labor movements in England (the Diggers) as a form of protest. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, through the Communist Manifesto, then created the archetype for all movements to come.

A Film Manifesto aims to free the filmmaking process from a particular time. It brings cinematic discourse into reality through an exchange of experiences and critical discussions. A Manifesto can be seen as a rhetorical provocation within the public sphere. The writing of a Manifesto is an opportunity to open up discourses on the state of cinema.

The Turbo Film Manifesto should be taken as an ‘idiot-proof’ guideline to escape unfinished nightmares and economic swamps. A manifesto is an excuse to make the film happen. More than rules, what is presented here are empirical suggestions, a guideline that produces a marketing strategy (as it was for all experimental cinema historical manifestos).

148 The Manifesto was first announce during a conference in NABA, Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, during the conference “Always Already New”, Milan 2011.

149 Alain Badiou, “Second Manifesto for Philosophy”, p. 1 (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2011).

15.1 ***Brief History of Cinema Manifestos***

I have selected here a few meaningful historical cinema manifestos that can help introducing our Turbo Film Manifesto.

If we focus on the history of cinema manifestos, from the perspective of their outcomes, we observe a string of failures, one after another. We should ask ourselves why theorists, revolutionary spirits, and radical artists have been producing so many manifestos in the past one hundred and fifty years with very little results and very similar failing trajectories.

Their aim is always been to redefine Cinema and the culture surrounding it. Dziga Vertov wrote a manifesto in 1922.¹⁵⁰ Futurists from Italy and Dadaists from France were all writing manifestos with the aim to overthrow all hierarchies whether they be political, aesthetic, or cultural.

The language used was always un-dialectical and dramatic, because of the nature of manifestos,. Often the outcomes didn't achieve their proclamatory goals. Historically, many of them had short life spans, but this must be seen as a consequence of the bond between what they said and when they said it. We could state that the history of cinema manifestos is the history of performed failures, the temporal peaks of ocean waves.

From my perspective, manifestos today, whether written by political activists, writers, artists or brands, always have the practical function of synthesizing the ongoing socio-cultural phenomena and promoting a practice and an aesthetic point of view.

To write a manifesto today is to set the rules of the game, write a memoir of recurrent past experiences, develop awareness of ongoing processes while suggesting how to manipulate them.

A manifesto needs to emerge from an actual practice and crystalize during the attempts to negate its own rules.

Historically, manifestos were also the interpretative tools necessary to open up the cinematic discourse to new possibilities, as with Free Cinema and the Oberhausen group.

¹⁵⁰ Dziga Vertov, "We: Variant of a Manifesto", translated by Kevin O'Brien in "The Writings of Dziga Vertov, edited by Annette Michelson, (University of California, Berkeley, 1984).



Alterazioni Video
 Paper Toy
 Turbo Film Manifesto
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 2016

When new technology democratized filmmaking opportunities while the established film industry remained closed and conservative, filmmakers worked outside the industry, defining themselves in their rejection of industrial norms, couched in terms of independence, innovation and integrity. They formalized their endeavor in a manifesto to strengthen their solidarity, purpose, and ideas, as well as their financially and ideologically precarious situation, to attract publicity and thus carry on the movement and their careers and films on their own terms.

15.1.1 The Free Cinema Manifesto

As we said, manifestos always appear in bound to their exact cultural timing. The Free Cinema screenings were very popular because at the time there were very little alternatives to mainstream cinema productions for audiences. There was a growing need for experimental practices and radical filmmakers who could represent the socio-political reality of their time. A time of rebellion and resistance to hierarchies and given systems. Whether political semantic or cultural. As with many manifestos, the Free Cinema's was opportunistic, embracing an already existing stream of production of socially engaged cinema. However, it had the ability and intuition to find relevance in a number of independent productions and could therefore establish a set of guidelines that would inspire generations to come. The Free Cinema manifesto reads as follows:

"These films were not made together; nor with the idea of showing them together. But when they came together, we felt they had an attitude in common. Implicit in this attitude is a belief in freedom, in the importance of people and the significance of the everyday.

As filmmakers we believe that no film can be too personal.

The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments.

Size is irrelevant.

Perfection is not an aim.

An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude."¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ "Free Cinema was a documentary film movement that emerged in England in the mid-1950s. Co-founded by Lindsay Anderson, though he later disdained the 'movement' tag, with Karel Reisz, Tony Richardson and Lorenza Mazzetti. The movement began with a programme of three short films at the National Film Theatre, London on 5 February 1956.", from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_Cinema, last time accessed, Sept, 2015.

The attitude that Anderson refers to is the key to understand the hidden power that lies behind most historic cinema manifestos. As Werner Herzog pointed out a number of times during interviews, filmmaking is a physical practice, and a difficult one. It needs training and a good set of safety rules that will enable the journey to continue under any circumstances. However, the promotional aspect of manifestos should not be underestimated.

Like a newspaper headline, a manifesto can command focus in the exponentially shortening attention span of filmmaking industries. Karel Reisz, one of the founders of Free Cinema once said in an interview:

“We made films and wrote manifestoes to provide a little publicity for the movement, but the value of those films, if they have one, lies in the films themselves and not in the movement.”

This is at the core of every cinema manifesto. A manifesto is often an attempt to define and group together a number of films with multiple natures and unclear DNA, films that often have failed somehow but generated a number of encounters that inspired new cinematic formulations and great masterpieces.

Lindsay Anderson once stated in an interview, when referring to Lorenza Mazzetti¹⁵² film *Together*: “Although *Together* has been shot entirely in the streets and houses, the markets and pubs of the East End – and with people in the East End behaving exactly as they do in everyday life – it is extremely far from being a Documentary. Nor is this intended as a realistic story of two deaf-mute workers in the London docks. It is not so much their muteness that matters, as their isolation.”¹⁵³

Turbo Films bring the tradition of experimental films to our day visual experience, actualizing their discourses in the new media environment. They share similar trajectories to those first experiments, and make many of the same mistakes, while maintaining a similar spirit and attitude towards narration and cinematic experiences.

152 Lorenza Mazzetti, *Together*, 52':00, BFI Experimental Film, London 1956.

153 Richard Rieser, “Disabling Imagery? A teaching guide to disability and moving image media”. P. 115 at <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&>, last time visited April 2016.

15.1.2 The Oberhausen Manifesto

“German short films by young authors, directors, and producers have in recent years received a large number of prizes at international festivals and gained the recognition of international critics.

These works and these successes show that the future of the German film lies in the hands of those who have proven that they speak a new film language.

Just as in other countries, the short film has become in Germany a school and an experimental basis for the feature film.

We declare our intention to create the new German feature film.

This new film needs new freedoms. Freedom from the conventions of the established industry.

Freedom from the outside influence of commercial partners. Freedom from the control of special-interest groups.

We have concrete intellectual, formal, and economic ideas about the production of the new German film.

We are as a collective prepared to take economic risks.

The old film is dead. We believe in the new one.”¹⁵⁴

In 1962, a couple of dozens of aspiring film makers from Germany ruptured from the national German Cinema, which they considered corrupted and void of intellectual substance. Their manifesto for a new way of making films became the base of what is known today as the New German Cinema.

In an article for Artforum, Eric Rentschler, writing on the Oberhausen Manifesto, asserted that “against formidable odds, the manifesto precipitated radical changes in the way films in the West Germany were funded and made, and it profoundly changed the equation with respect to the question of who would make them, with an immediacy, a vehemence, and a pertinacity that are truly astonishing.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ The Oberhausen Manifesto was a declaration by a group of 26 young German filmmakers at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, North Rhine-Westphalia on 28 February 1962.

¹⁵⁵ Eric Rentschler, “Declaration of Independents” Artforum, New York, 2012.

The Oberhausen Group had “concrete intellectual, formal, and economical ideas” on how to make their films. To overcome financial obstacles and facilitate distribution and production, they focused mostly on the format of short films. This choice created a terrain for experimental new forms and great risk-taking.

Turbo Films share the same preconditions, merging this experimental freedom and format choice and adding a contemporary suicidal attitude towards failure that is typical of contemporary user-generated media production

The Oberhausen directors were aware of the necessity of international distribution, at the time the only way to actually show the works. Because of an international network of experimental filmmaking groups, they were able to join forces and fund future productions. They developed an effective distribution strategy between international art house, festivals, and small local theaters that were screening short films before showing the features/

The ability to self-organize the promotion and the distribution of their films internationally successfully stands out as an example. Their manifesto was empowered by this self-confidence in distribution.

Turbo Films share with these past experiences similar attitudes in terms of self-distribution strategies, but in a completely different environment. A Turbo Film has in its DNA the ability to reshape between contexts while looking for a space where to exist. Like a chameleon - who changes color skin accordingly to his environment – and differently from the experimental films practices of the 60s and 70s, a Turbo Film is unstable and unfinished, constantly looking for new ways of circulation and reformulation: film as a mean without an end.

15.1.3 The New American Cinema Group

Another relevant experimental film group that has survived history because of their ability to self-distribute their films is the New America Cinema Group.

In an interview Jonas Mekas, one of the founders, said about the group:

“On September 28th, 1960, some 23 independent filmmakers, including myself, met in New York and decided to create a self-help organization which became

known as the New American Cinema Group. The Group held monthly informal meetings and discussed dreams and problems of independently working filmmakers. Several small committees were created in order to explore the financing, promotion, and distribution of our films. My own assignment, besides that of serving as the President of the Board—was to investigate new methods of distribution.

After looking into the existing film distribution organizations, and seeing how few of them were interested in our work, I came to the conclusion that the only thing to do was to create our own cooperative film distribution center, run by ourselves.”¹⁵⁶

The New American Film group contributed the strong notion of *rethinking a production house*. All experimental cinema groups, around the world, learned from their experience, networking together between Europe, South America, and the US. Their production house became a reference for international independent filmmakers.

While Anderson and the Brit are relevant for their attitude and enthusiastic spirit with which they were operating, the Oberhausen Group and the NACG were precursors on how to achieve self-distribution, work circulation, and international networking.

Another great example of a filmic apparatus is *Dogma 95* by Las Von Trier and Thomas Vinterberg. *Dogma 95* freed, any cinema manifesto from idealistic and radical discourse by proposing the practicality of a ‘do it yourself’ guide.

15.1.4 *Dogma 95 and The Vow of Chastity*

“I swear to submit to the following set of rules drawn up and confirmed by DOGMA 95: Shooting must be done on location. Props and sets must not be brought in (if a particular prop is necessary for the story, a location must be chosen where this prop is to be found).

The sound must never be produced apart from the images or vice versa. (Music must not be used unless it occurs where the scene is being shot.)

The camera must be hand-held. Any movement or immobility attainable in the hand is permitted.

¹⁵⁶ Jonas Mekas, “*The Film-Maker’s Cooperative: A Brief History*” referred from <http://film-makerscoop.com/about/history>, last time accessed Sept 2015.

The film must be in color. Special lighting is not acceptable. (If there is too little light for exposure the scene must be cut or a single lamp be attached to the camera.)

Optical work and filters are forbidden.

The film must not contain superficial action. (Murders, weapons, etc. must not occur.)

Temporal and geographical alienation are forbidden. (That is to say that the film takes place here and now.)

Genre movies are not acceptable.

The film format must be Academy 35 mm.

The director must not be credited.

Furthermore I swear as a director to refrain from personal taste! I am no longer an artist. I swear to refrain from creating a “work”, as I regard the instant as more important than the whole. My supreme goal is to force the truth out of my characters and settings. I swear to do so by all the means available and at the cost of any good taste and any aesthetic considerations.”¹⁵⁷

John Roberts notes, “Like many cinematic manifestos this century, Dogma 95’s edicts, emphasize the paralysis and decadence of commercial cinema in terms of its corrupting illusionism, trickery and sentimentality. The relationship between social experience and the dominant forms of cinematic narration is challenged on the grounds of its loss of authentic speech and agency’. Yet, despite these parallels with past manifesto claims, Roberts goes on to note that: ‘What is significant about this list [of rules] is its largely technical and formal character; there are no political exhortations, or denunciations of other film makers; it is, rather, a kind of low-key DIY guide for aspirant amateurs; the fire of the 1960s avant-garde is tempered by an earnest practicality.”¹⁵⁸

Dogma 95 stands in rupture with the French avant-gardists and the national cinema groups of the sixties and seventies. Lars von Trier, in an interview, stated:

“In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple

¹⁵⁷ *Vow of Chastity*, Lars von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg, Copenhagen, Monday 13 March 1999.

¹⁵⁸ John Roberts, ‘Dogma ‘95’ p. 141, (*New Left Review* 238, 1999).

that washed ashore and turned to muck. Slogans of individualism and freedom created works for a while, but no changes. The wave was up for grabs, like the directors themselves. The wave was never stronger than the men behind it. The anti-bourgeois cinema itself became bourgeois, because the foundations upon which its theories were based was the bourgeois perception of art. The auteur concept was bourgeois romanticism from the very start and thereby... False!”¹⁵⁹

Many other manifesto were written in the past fifty years and others are still flourishing online. I didn't want to focus on the most politicized manifesto of the sixties and seventies even if they had great historical relevance. One example could be the Argentinian Third Cinema Manifesto¹⁶⁰ that rejected the idea of Cinema as a vehicle for personal expression and was attempting to transform Cinema in a weapon for political revolution.

Even the dictator of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, wrote a cinema manifesto where cinema and filmmaking had to mirror the political structure of his dictatorship and political vision.¹⁶¹ recognizing in the power of filmmaking a dangerous and effective tool to change people minds and visions.

15.2 The No Wave Manifesto

The last manifesto that can be of reference for Turbo Film is the No Wave manifesto.¹⁶² This manifesto resonates in Turbo Films for the freshness and actuality of the language used and the deregulatory freedom that was empowering in terms of contents , formats and language: a punk approach to filmmaking and a radical and aggressive attitude towards the audience.

“We propose that all film schools be blown up and all boring films never be made again. We propose that a sense of humor is an essential element discarded by the doddering academics and further, that any film which doesn't shock isn't worth looking at.

¹⁵⁹ Las Von Trier, last time seen at: <http://www.zinzin.com/observations/2012/the-beautiful-dogma-of-dogme-95/>.

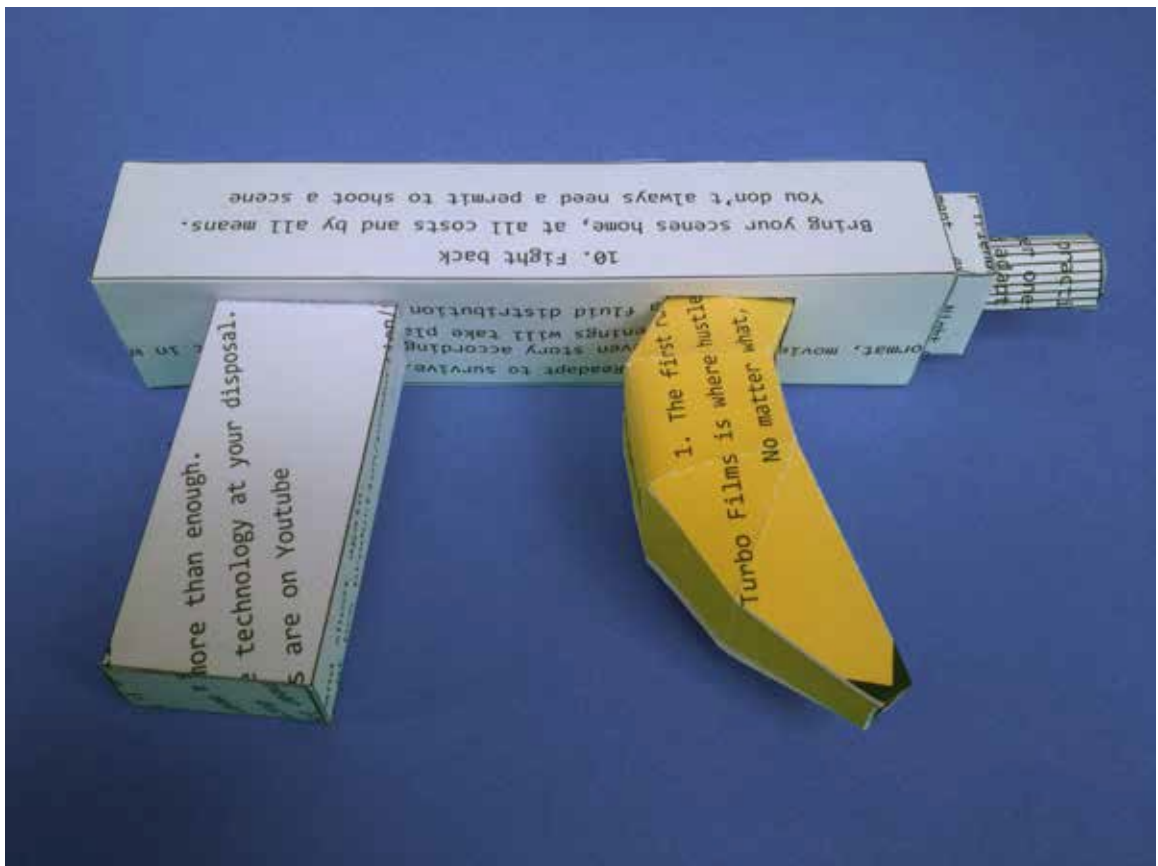
¹⁶⁰ Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Toward a Third Cinema”, *Tricontinental*, N14, Buenos Aires, 1969.

¹⁶¹ Kim Jong Il, “The Cinema and directing”, Pyongyang, Korea, 1987.

¹⁶² Nick Zedd alias Orion Jericho, “Cinema of Transgression” first published in *The Underground Film Bulletin*, New York, 1985.

There will be blood, shame, pain and ecstasy, the likes of which no one has yet imagined. None shall emerge unscathed. Since there is no afterlife, the only hell is the hell of praying, obeying laws, and debasing yourself before authority figures, the only heaven is the heaven of sin, being rebellious, having fun, fucking, learning new things and breaking as many rules as you can.”¹⁶³

The Turbo Film Manifesto digests these past experiences, contextualizing them in their time and place, and suggesting with a similar spirit a new system to be applied to film practice.



Alterazioni Video
Paper Toy
Turbo Film Manifesto
limited edition
2016

¹⁶³ The No wave Manifesto, last seen at: <http://nowavefanzine.blogspot.com/2009/08/short-manifesto.html>, June 2016.

15.2.1 *The Turbo Film Manifesto*

1. The first rule is that there are no rules. Turbo Films are where hustlers turn into filmmakers and vice versa. No matter what, the films comes home with you.

Self-produced Turbo Expeditions are very costly in terms of energy and human resources. They involve a group of people and have the intensity of a two week tournament. In Turbo Films there are no preproduction trips to scout locations. Most of the talents are local and have limited time to dedicate to filmmaking. Often Turbo Films involve entire local communities like tribes or urban crews. The ideas and parameters of the film must take shape during this process in order to bring home the footage.

Differently from one-man documentary, filming is often the final act of an artificial situation created by the filmmakers. This process cannot be stressed for long periods. Following a situationist approach, the film must be made with a high intensity for a short period of time. The stories will then develop in relation to the contexts and situations set in place. Each Turbo Film brings the possibility of several organic short stories.

These stories resonate in relation to the specific goal of each screening, as an organized database of original footage and found material. Turbo Films reflect some of the key points of Lev Manovich's database films that referenced earlier.

2. Make your weakness become your strength. In Turbo Films creative solutions are defined by necessity, an economy of exchange that shapes the film itself and opens it up.

Turbo Films absorb the spontaneity and speed of poor images as defined by Hito Steyerl. This speed lacks pixel quality and costly production equipment, but allows a direct and spontaneous representation of the orchestrated situations, 'representing reality with reality' as Pasolini used to say. In this creative and productive context, money is just one of the values that can be exchanged on the field. By building intense relationships with local communities and opening up the creative projects with whoever is involved, creates an economy of exchange that is far more valuable for both sides and further incorporates those who are involved.

3. Use what you have, it is more than enough. Adapt your aesthetics and learn from the technology at your disposal. Special effects tutorials are on Youtube.

Be aware of the potentialities that lie in digital matter and know the basics on how to manipulate them is the key. The tools can be found on online tutorials or stolen from previous productions. The 'perfect image' does not exist and if it does it is not Turbo. From the performance side of the process, no professional actor is ever involved, creating streams of performed failures that often have incredible cinematic qualities. This is how the Turbo aesthetic is shaped. Performed failures and Youtube tutorials are the back bones that hold together this particular cinematic style.

4. Shoot, edit, shit and shoot again. Turbo Films undo the efficient, linear logic of pre-production/production/post production. Film is a mean without an end.

As John Kelsey wrote in his Pedestrian Cinema Text (*Moving Moving Images*) "We are all moving images." We get together, colliding in an ongoing process without end. We may move or stay still, but we can't pretend to run in a straight line. The process is organic, our nature is organic, and we need to forget any linear logic in the creative process. Screening while shooting (as in *Blind Barber*, *Surfing With Satoshi*), building, and burning "in a exiting idiotic no-time."

The liquid nature of Turbo Films does the rest, reshaping the format accordingly to the context.

5. Writing is a dreadful practice. Turbo Films require no scripts, at least no proper ones; the story is a seed from which the movie will grow and adapt itself.

Writing a Turbo Film is like signing a life insurance contract. You go on with your life thinking that you are covered and if something happens, you find out there is always an exception that you didn't consider and that allows the company to not follow the agreement. In a similar way scripts in Turbo Films make you feel safer in preproduction even if at the end of the process they appear as useless tools. Some times to have a script (even just a couple of pages) has some practical use. For example during the fundraising it helps sponsors and institutions to believe in the film.

On the field, it helps to convince police officers, landlords, bartenders, and girls that you are actually following a plan. Experience thought us that it needs to look formally like a real script and needs to be as detailed as possible in terms of titles and lists of names. It needs to be printed and tangible, possibly with a bunch of stamps and handmade signatures. If distributed to the crew at the beginning of the process it provides a good resource of useful paper for writing notes or a map with the escape routes. Paper is valuable even in the digital realm. Most of the time Turbo Films develop a kind of visual digital script, something in between a storyboard and a fashion mood board, that lives online and becomes a source of inspiration during the production process. Streams of selected 'poor images' are collected for months. They can be re-enacted and like all images they have the power to be shown and understood by the actors and participants, no matter which language they speak.

6. *Keep Your friends close, but keep your enemies closer. Night casting is a key element, eventually reality and fiction will merge into a disorientating experience that makes sense.*

Turbo Films are about places, people and their encounters. Most of the success of the films is, like in other contexts, given by the people you meet. In this work frame any encounter can become a great opportunity, but we suggest to look in places like bars, streets, corners where local casting agents don't go. Unsafe situations are often rich with real characters and incredible human material. To make a Turbo Film you need to dig in the mud and feel the unsafe risks of life.

7. *The location is half of the job: make sure you pick the right one. Let the location act itself out. Let it scream.*

Jean Rouch started a process that arrived to us as fresh as backed bread. Applying his methodologies in the Turbo Context gave to the whole experience a spin of adventure and fun that was fundamental for the film process. During this research, I've been shooting Turbo Films in four continents around the world, each time adapting to the culture and location where I landed.

It occurs to me that the location has to act itself out. You need to absorb it and be receptive. In filmmaking you need objects and places as much as you need people. Without preproduction and without a trajectory, the location can become

like a big mother that embraces you but can just as well give you a hard spanking. It's quite impossible to place your trust on local guides and tourist organizations. No one is prepared to suggest a Turbo location. The tourism industry killed any easy cut in location scouting

Forcing rules and attitudes far from the local culture and if you don't get lost alone you risk shooting a film that has already been shot by hundreds of honeymooners. A best approach is to jump on a motorcycle, get lost, and start shooting.

8. Play it yourself. To give your cinematic monster a special kick, find or form a temporary local band, make them write, compose and play the soundtrack while you're shooting.

Using other authors' famous songs in your film is like asking to someone else to finish your book. It's not Turbo. Music, thanks to its nature is the perfect trigger in an unknown community. Through music you get to know the real rockers, the characters that will become pillars in your film. Being an organic apparatus, Turbo Films integrates the music into the filmic process. In *All My Friends are Dead*, forming the band was the strongest experience of the whole film. We became so close to the band members (former inmates, drug dealers, artisans)

9. Readapt to survive. Change format, movie length, or even story accordingly to the context in which the screenings will take place. Develop a fluid distribution strategy

Here again the nature of digital matter becomes the reason behind multiple version of the same Turbo Film. Being aware of the distribution contexts in which the film will circulate suggests each time a different narrative structure. This specific quality of Turbo Films is deducted from a survival instinct that allows the film to circulate no matter which are the restrictions of a particular festival or context rules.

10. Fight back. Bring your scenes home, at all costs and by all means. You don't always need a permit to shoot a scene

Making a TF is not easy and it is not for everyone. You need to be brave and sure of what you are doing. The attitude is key. Time often plays against you.

Institutions, private guards, rules, permits...It seems like everything has been built to stop spontaneous interactions and participative creative situations. When you are shooting a TF, you are on a kind of mission. You jump gates and you find ways to get the scene as if it was a matter of life or death. During the shooting of *Surfing with Satoshi*, I wanted a scene inside a police car. We figured out that the best way to achieve this result was by getting pulled over from local police officer and starting a conversation. We all nearly got arrested for doing a party in the back of a pick up truck while driving around the Puerto Rican countryside, but once the cop stopped us and understood that we were shooting a film, they became incredibly participative and friendly and took part in the shooting, letting us use their guns and cars.

16. Turbo Films Screenings and the New Cinema Event

In Turbo Films, the screening is often an extension of the filmmaking. Due to their dispersion online, the screening night becomes a festive spectacle that echoes the early cinema projection nights.

The screening night becomes the New Cinema Event. I introduce here three examples, of Turbo Films screening nights that are useful to understand the attitude towards this endless and in process apparatus.

In 2011, when I was invited to take part to Performa 11, a Biennale that takes place all around New York, I decided with Alterazioni Video to shoot, a few weeks before the scheduled screening, a Turbo Film around the art market speculation and the financial crisis of 2009 that generated the Occupy Wall Street movement in New York.

The Turbo Film casting included successful artists and curators acting as themselves. The film was screened in an old speak easy in the East Village, behind a Barbershop, a hidden bar with a huge screen in the middle and 200 chairs around it. In the Barbershop, out of the audience's sight, the main scene of the film was performed and streamed live back in the bar. The editing, the shooting, and the screening were happening simultaneously.

The situation was very similar to the origins of films screenings, “where no one was dictating the numbers of sequences or reels that made up a film [...]The audience could move about, talk, fight and arrange the furniture according to their impulses.”¹⁶⁴

The editing room was next to the audience and drinks were served during the screening. Through that experience it became clear to me how Turbo Films need a specific approach to screening similar to the rest of its creative process and system of production. The two things coexisted perfectly.

Thinking of the screening as part of the filmic process was the starting point for the premiere screening night event of the Turbo Film ‘Surfing With Satoshi’. The chosen location was an unused parking lot run by a Puerto Rican family under the Williamsburg Bridge in Manhattan. We placed hundreds of chairs in the open lot and we parked a white truck in front. Inside the truck we made an illegal margarita bar and projected the film on the side of the white truck trailer. The screening became part of the film aesthetic and the audience felt like if they were part of the film themselves. The location became a film set and turned into an open air party until the police came to stop it, which added a cinematic ending to the whole.

The last New Cinema Event I would like to bring to attention is one that never happened, becoming an event in absence: *Rosa Perfetto*.

We were invited by the MAR Museum of Ravenna to have our first Italian museum solo show. I decided, in accordance with all Alterazioni Video, to make a controversial piece about the legend surrounding the statue of Guidarello Guidarelli that was guarded in the permanent collection of the same museum. The legend tells that any girl that would kiss the statue of Guidarello Guidarelli would get married within a year. For three-hundred years women from all over Europe came to Ravenna to kiss the statue. It was a very strong popular tradition that left on the surface of the statue a beautiful red tone. The tone was given by the many layers of lipstick traces from all the sweet kisses that the statue received. The Director of the Museum, after many years of personal struggle, decided to stop the tradition by moving the statue into the museum and cleaning the red layers away from the white marble.

¹⁶⁴ J. Kelsey, “Pedestrian Cinema” found in “Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art” p.115 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).

This controversial restoration cost several hundred thousand Euros to tax payers and was not well accepted by the Ravenna citizens. It was a battle between high culture and popular culture.

We decided to shoot a Turbo Film on the legend of the statue and on the passion that the Ravennate people showed towards this popular tradition. We hired a porn star to interact sexually with the statue. The outcome was a soft porn of incredible beauty and strong metaphoric meanings. The film was shot in one day with permission from the museum director, but with no script or detailed agreement on the contents.

The shooting day happened just two days before the opening of the show. When the Director saw the footage he censured the entire show and organized a press conference. The screening room was installed and ready to be used and during the opening night remained black and silent surrounded by an audience willing to see it. The film was experienced by word of mouth and people were forced to make form an opinion about the film up without the opportunity to see it. Soon the story spread and new legends were added to the mix. The following day all local newspapers had on their front page the only frame that partly obscured that we were able to smuggle to the press.

Many Ravennati asked publically to be able to watch the film and that day probably thousands of diverse Turbo Films were made in the mind of the readers.

17. Distribution vs Dispersion

Another recurrent characteristic of Turbo Film is its online dispersion. We spoke about the organic ability of Turbo Films to reshape while responding to different contexts. The most interesting case, in this respect, is the one of *All My Friends Are Dead*.

During the last four years this film morphed in five main different shapes and narrative structure. It was first exhibited at the Fondazione Sandretto Rebaudengo in Turin as an art film. The editing included a multilayer selection of different scenes, from documentary ones to the more fictionalized ones, up to the final musical and included as well backstage footage, discussions, backstories of the



Backstage photo during the shooting of Rosa Perfetto, Museum of the City of Ravenna. this was the only image leaked to the media before lawyers came in the picture and blocked the circulation of the work for a couple of years. The film is now free from censorship.

journey and of the creative process. It was a two-hour edit, and became a film about making a film in Africa. The screening room included a series of printed mattress that we produced using imagery from our footage. The comfortable sculpture pieces and the film interacted in an articulated installation that could be seen as an expanded cinema environment as defined by Duncan White¹⁶⁵.

A few months later, Ivan Bargna, the anthropologist that invited us to Cameroon used a much simpler edit, with a focus on the set and the backstage in a series of Anthropology conferences on the cultural crash that we enacted together with the Bamileke tribe. On this occasion the footage was selected and arranged in a shorter timeline, mostly using backstage footage and different takes of the same fictional scene. The narration followed a similar trajectory of the previous editing but with a different focus and as consequence the film felt completely different to the audience. One year later the film was selected for the Milano Film Festival. This time the edit was 45 minutes long. We used only the fictional scenes, building up a simple narrative with a strong climax, and ending the film as a horror musical. It was an intense, visionary short film that found a good response from the audience in the Theater. If we look online for the film it is possible to find a series of cinematic short trailers that synthesize the whole experience from different angles. We as well uploaded on YouTube a database that includes all the footage we made organized by topic. This deconstructed version of the film can be played in order through the playlist option of the platform, but it can be used as well as an archive of cinematic footage for other films or stories to come. This polymorphic nature of Turbo Films is to be considered as an attitude towards footage that reflects the tendencies of today digital visual culture.

John Kelsey in his text on Pedestrian Cinema, titled, *The Dream Has Ended: The Return of the Real*, writes:

“Distribution is the business of circulating products. Dispersion is something else. To disperse a film is to scrap the notion of a complete and finished product. One film-in progress can be usurped by or added to another at any point. Material from any production can be recycled and put to new uses by any other. The making of one film can unmake the others.

¹⁶⁵ Duncan White, David Curtis, A.L. Rees and Steven Ball, “Expanded Cinema, Art Performance Film” p.11 (Tate Publishing, London, 2011).

Make your media... Be your media... The medium is what we have in common, a common situation, a common misery.”¹⁶⁶

Following Kelsey trajectory Turbo Films can be perceived as a product of this organic environment. They morph according to an ongoing ecosystem that changes constantly. More than distribution strategies, we should address the circulation of Turbo Films as a form of dispersion.

In an economy surrounding filmic media objects that is still driven by authors, copyright, and the idealistic idea of savior geniuses, Turbo Films are desperate migrants constantly moving across borders. Their nature, their survival instinct, tries to fit in, to be part of contexts where they are temporally placed, whether these are art, cinema, television, or online pop culture, but always fail to feel comfortable and stable.

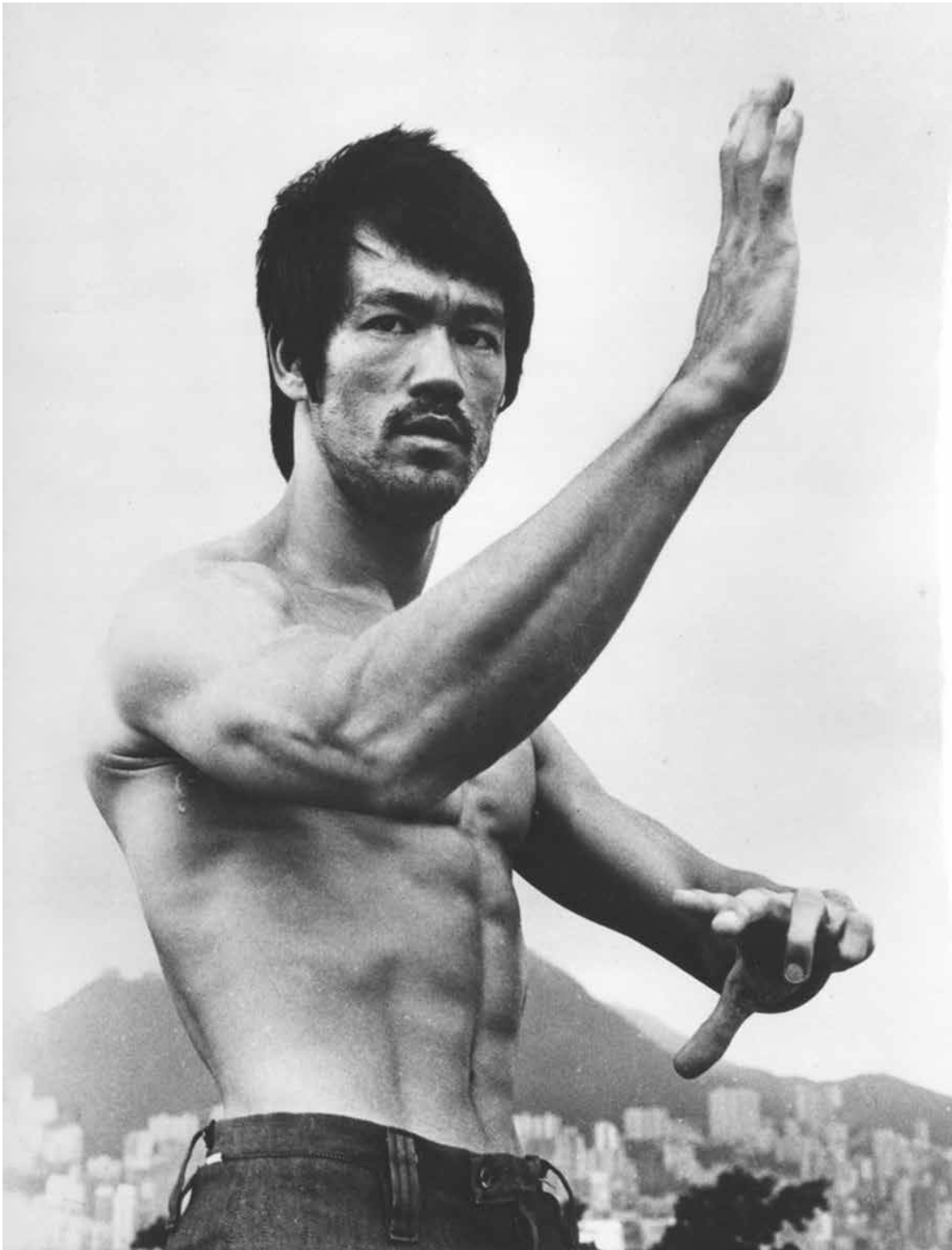
Turbo Films are aware of their unstable nature, and they often fail in their attempt to reshape and re-contextualize by never meeting the specific standards required. Their instability mirrors the uncertain trajectories of the visual culture of today. Then again, watching at films we learn something about life. In this perspective I envision the emergence of a number of new media object that will radically change the way we absorb information and get to know the world around us. I envision an integrated news media product that learns from experimental cinema, creative activism, art, user generated web culture and pop music aesthetic.

Experiences that, if applied to investigative content and edited as media products become meaningful news formats. As we said this approach can be seen as a form of ‘expanded journalism’. An attitude that can become one of the future of investigative journalism and storytelling. A new format for inspiring and engaging the audience. A teamwork between artist, journalists and filmmakers.

While referring to Turbo Films and similar practices, we could use Bruce Lee definition of kung-fu and apply it to the unstable nature of future media objects of digital nature.

The great martial art master and pop icon, stated in a famous video interview, when asked to describe what kung-fu was:

¹⁶⁶ J. Kelsey, “Pedestrian Cinema” found in *“Rich Texts: Selected Writing for Art”*, p.115 (London, Sternberg Press, 2010).



Bruce Lee.

“Be like water my friend, empty your mind, be formless. Shapeless, like water. If you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup. You put water into a bottle and it becomes the bottle. You put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”¹⁶⁷

In other words the Turbo Film apparatus' fluidity and adaptation to multiple formats and contexts - and its consequential “dispersion” - liberates us from the question of the existence of a specific Turbo format given outside its relation of forms of distribution and fruition. Turbo Ffilm becomes the emptiness, each time different, each time full of contents, determined and constantly shaped by its contexts and yet emptied all over again.

¹⁶⁷ Bruce Lee, TV interview, seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqHSbMR_udo, last time accessed September, 2015.

18. Appendices

As appendices to this thesis I provide my latest publication “Turbo Film and the Uncertain Future of Moving Images”, published in occasion of my retrospective exhibition in Milan at the Italian Cinema Foundation¹⁶⁸ in February, 2016.

In this book I collected an inquiry around Turbo Films with texts by art curators, films directors, artists, film historians and friends who collaborated in the making on the films taking active part to the Turbo Film creative process.

This book contains as well an important iconographic memory of these cinematic experiences with a collection of more than 200 photographs taken during the filming process.

¹⁶⁸ Turbo Film and The Uncertain Future Of Moving Images, edited by Paololuca Barbieri Marchi, (Fausto Lupetti Editore, Milan, 2016).

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